MEDIEVAL INDIA : SOCIETY, THE JAGIRDARI CRISIS AND THE VILLAGE

SATISH CHANDRA

Medieval India

SOCIETY, THE JAGIRDARI CRISIS AND THE VILLAGE

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First published 1982 by
MACMILLAN INDIA LIMITED
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras

Associated companies throughout the world

SBN 33390 396 X

Published by S.G. Wasani for Macmillan India Limited
4 Community Centre, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase I
New Delhi 110 028

Printed at Rajkamal Electric Press, 4163 Arya Pura
Delhi 110 007

X183
13761
MAIN

HN683
C467
1982
MAIN

TO MY WIFE

Shobha

WHOSE SYMPATHY AND SILENT SUPPORT HAS BEEN
INVALUABLE TO ME

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr A.J. Qaiser and Mr Gautam Bhadra for help in the documentation of some aspects, particularly trade, commerce and economic life, and society in Bengal, which appear in Chapter VII. I would also like to thank Dr Dilbagh Singh, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University for his help in preparing the Tables and Appendices for Chapters IV and XIII and for calling my attention to the Rajasthani Records. I am also obliged to Mr Hasan Mahmud, then Research Officer, Indian Council of Historical Research for providing references to Khwaja Yasin's *Glossary*. I am beholden to Professor Yogendra Singh, Centre for Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for bringing the recent sociological works regarding Indian village society to my notice, and to many other scholars and colleagues who have helped me from time to time, in various ways. In particular, I would like to thank Prof. S. Nurul Hasan whose comments on various articles were of immense help to me.

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Abbreviations

Br. Mus.	British Museum
HJE	*Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*
IO	India Office
IESHR	*Indian Economic and Social History Review*
IHR	*Indian Historical Review*
IHQ	*Indian History Quarterly*
JASB N.S.	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal: New Series*
JEH	*Journal of Economic History*
JESHO	*Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JIH	*Journal of Indian History*
JUPHS	*Journal of the U.P. Historical Society*
MIQ	*Medieval India Quarterly*
MIS	*Marathanchya Itihasanchi Sadhanen*
Procs. IHC	*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*
R.S.A.	Rajasthan State Archives
SCS	*Shiv Charitra Sahitya*

Introduction

THESE PAPERS represent a selection of the papers on medieval Indian society and institutions, I had written over a period of twenty years and more. Many of the papers are of a tentative nature, and represent a groping towards a better understanding of the structure and working of medieval Indian society. Apart from sources, they deal with the processes of growth in medieval Indian society, structure and stratification in village society, and the factors which created a crisis towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, leading to the disintegration of the centralised Mughal Empire, and ultimately, to the establishment of British rule in the country. For want of a better word, I have designated this crisis as 'the crisis of the *jagirdari* system'. There has been a great deal of discussion among scholars on the validity and the precise meaning of this term. In an article written for this book, I have tried to spell out my understanding of the nature of this crisis, i.e., the crisis of the *jagirdari* system.

In a few of the articles, an attempt has been made to place the rise and growth of the Maratha movement in a wider social perspective. A few of the articles deal with the attitude of the Mughal ruling class towards trade, growth of a money economy in India during the seventeenth century, and the problem whether medieval Indian society was in a process of development which may be broadly called transition from a traditional feudal society to a capitalist society before the process was distorted and disrupted by British rule and the establishment of a colonial economy in India.

The problems of development have lately become a matter of interest not only to historians but to economists, sociologists and to many others. This is a welcome development because it has amongst other things quietly buried the myth of the 'unchanging orient', sedulously fostered by colonial historians and others, and uncritically accepted by many Indian historians.

The purpose of bringing together these tentative papers would have been served if they can, even in a limited manner, contribute to the study and discussion of medieval Indian society in its varied aspects and dimensions. I hope that they would also be found useful by students of medieval Indian history. However, owing to certain practical difficulties it has not been possible to use diacritical marks.

I am grateful to Macmillan India for bringing out these papers, both in English and Hindi.

New Delhi
June 1981

SATISH CHANDRA

I

The Jaipur Pargana Records: Some Aspects of Economic History

THE LARGE mass of documents relevant to economic and revenue history available in the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, commence roughly from the year 1664, though a few documents date to the period from 1648 to 1663. There are large gaps in the documents, a connected series being available only from 1709 onwards. The series are continued till the 1830s, and in some cases till the end of the nineteenth century, depending apparently upon the date when a system of administration based on the British Indian system was introduced in the different states. The mass of the documents is extremely large and has not yet even been catalogued, much less indexed. The present paper is based on a detailed sampling of the miscellaneous types of documents available. Apart from the official documents in the State Archives there are numerous private collections available in Rajasthan. The largest group of such documents is still in the custody of the former ruling princes, and in the collections of the various *jagirdars* (called *thikanedars*). Sample copies procured from some of these collections confirm that these records are an invaluable supplement to the official state records. Records in the possession of *mahajans*, temples, *muafidars*, etc., are also extremely important for a study of economic life, but no systematic collection of these has been made as yet.

The documents bearing on agrarian relations are variously

Read at the seminar on Social and Economic History, Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1966, in conjunction with Shri S.P. Gupta; published in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review* (*IESHR*), Vol. III, No. 3, 1966, pp. 303-15.

called *bahis* in Bikaner and Jodhpur, *tojis* in Mewar, and *arhsattas*, *awarja*, *muazana*, etc., in the Jaipur State. The Bikaner *bahis* are ascribed to the sixteenth century, but they have yet to be deciphered and analysed. The Jodhpur *bahis* generally start from the early eighteenth century. The largest collection of revenue records available relate to the erstwhile Jaipur State. It makes possible a study of the actual revenue administration of the area, enables a comparison between the pattern of administration in an area comprising a chief's territory with that in other parts of the empire, and can help us to determine the crop pattern, productivity, movement of prices, etc., in the area during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries.

Arsatta, *adsatta*, or *udsutta*, also corruptly, *arsotta*, *arhsatto* and *atosatta*, possibly also a modification of the preceding, or *arsuth* (Hindi and Marathi), occurs in other dialects also. It is defined by Wilson as 'Estimate, guess, a rough calculation, monthly treasury account of the receipts and disbursements made up from the daily entries'.[1] A tradition is current in Rajasthan that *arhsatta* is *ath-satta* or eight knots, and deals with eight departments in the state, namely, *tavi*, *darar rukha*, *muafi*, *jagir*, *ijara*, *bhom*, *punyaudik*, *inam*. But this does not seem to be correct, because in practice there seem to be innumerable types of *arhsattas*, such as *arhsatta jamabandi*, *arhsatta mujmil*, *arhsatta khazana*, *arhsatta potdar*, *arhsatta bhomi*, *arhsatta ekharfi*, *arhsatta qarar baqi*, *arhsatta jama kharch*, *arhsatta bagayat*, etc. All these *arhsattas* do not necessarily contain the information on the various departments mentioned above. The differences between these various types of *arhsattas* are, however, not important for the present paper. We may take it that *arhsattas* are ledgers of receipts and disbursements, generally maintained on a *pargana*-wise basis, and providing all revenue information to the diwan's office regarding the condition of the *pargana* such as the number of *mauzas* (*asli*, *dakhli* and *wiran*, i.e., deserted), the *mauzas* held in *khalisa*, *jagir*, *bhom*, etc., the assessment (*muqarra jama*) for each *mauza*, the *baqaya*, realisations under various heads, sanctioned expenditure, *baqi*, etc. The information contained in the *arhsattas* is supported by numerous other documents such as *yad-dasht*, *nirakh bazar*, *nirakh jamabandi*, *barat*, etc.

[1]H.H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms of British India* (2nd ed., Delhi, 1968), p. 32.

The Jaipur *Pargana Records* thus constitute the largest mass of such revenue records for the second half of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. On the basis of these records a statistical study of the revenue and economic trends during the period has been made possible. Such a study would not only throw a great deal of light on the basic economic trends within the area, but also provide a useful and reliable point of departure for assessing trends in the economy of some of the neighbouring areas with which Rajasthan was closely connected. However, a study of the nature mentioned above poses a number of problems, both of methodology and of interpretation. The records, even for the eighteenth century, are of a fragmentary nature, and do not permit the continuous study of any *pargana*. It would thus be necessary to select a few points of reference, for example, every tenth or twentieth year, both at the level of the *pargana* and at the level of the *mauza*. In doing so, care has to be taken to select, as far as possible, a normal year, i.e., one in which no famines are known to have occurred, or the area had not been disturbed by any wars. However, such a method would introduce its own distortion, since famines and wars were two of the chief scourges in the life of the peasant during the medieval period. One method of correcting such a distortion could be to work back from the nineteenth century, note the periodicity of famines, their broad incidence, extent, etc., and make a similar allowance for the eighteenth century. The problem of war ravages would still remain, however.

For computing changes in the pattern of crop production, it would be desirable both to work forward from the statistics provided in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, and to work backwards from the statistics, reports, etc., for the nineteenth century. This implies the assumption that such things as productivity and techniques of production have not changed much during the period. Given the present state of our knowledge, this would appear to be the only way of bridging many of the gaps in the agrarian history of the period.

The limitations of the Jaipur *Pargana Records* available to us might also be pointed out. In general, the *arhsattas* do not provide figures for the revenue demand upon individual peasants, nor for the size of holdings or the nature of peasant rights. Even the *zamindar* figures rarely in the documents. The reasons for these

omissions may be speculated upon, but need to be mentioned here only briefly.

We may now proceed to analyse in greater detail the nature of the information provided by the Jaipur *Pargana Records*, and to put forward a few tentative hypotheses.

Nature of the Jaipur Raja's Principality

It seems that during the seventeenth century, the territory controlled by the Rajput rajas consisted of two parts: territory recognised as theirs by right of heredity, called *watan jagir* or simply *watan*, and areas granted to them by way of *tankhwah jagir*, i.e., as salary for the *mansab* they held in the imperial hierarchy. In addition to this, the rajas frequently took numerous tracts on *ijara*, either from the Mughal government or individual grantees. The interesting point here is that the area held in *watan jagir* was far smaller than the area held in *tankhwah jagir*. The *parganas* in which *tankhwah jagir* was held were often not contiguous to each other and did not form a complete bloc. Further, it was rare for any *pargana* to be granted to the rajas *dar-o-bast* in *jagir*. In each of the *parganas*, a few *mauzas* could be part of royal *khalisa* or assigned to imperial *mansabdars*. The pattern may be indicated by a few samples:

(a) In *pargana* Lalsot, *sarkar* and *subah* Akbarabad, *s.v.* 1744 (A.D. 1687) the total number of *mauzas* was 147, out of which, 25$\frac{3}{4}$ *mauzas* were under the imperial *khalisa*, 52$\frac{3}{4}$ *mauzas* were assigned to the imperial *mansabdar* and 68$\frac{1}{2}$ were held by the maharaja in *khalisa*.

(b) In *pargana* Amarsar, *sarkar* Nagpur, *subah* Ajmer, *s.v.* 1789 (A.D. 1732), the total number of *mauzas* were 125, out of which 25 *mauzas* were assigned to the imperial *mansabdars* and the rest were held by the maharaja in *jagir*.

(c) In *pargana* Malarna, *sarkar* Garh Ranthambhore, *s.v.* 1747 (A.D. 1690) containing 150 *mauzas*, with a *jama* of *dam* lacs 1,00,00,000 in imperial *khalisa* and imperial *mansabdars* (*dam* 73,00,000), there were 108 *mauzas*. The remaining (*baqi*) 42 *mauzas* were in the *jagir* of the maharaja (*dam* 27,00,000).

The rulers sought to supplement their holdings by taking *mauzas* in *ijara* either out of those held in *khalisa* or those assign-

ed to *jagirdars*. The extent and pattern of these *ijaras* need to be carefully studied, and the nature of the rights enjoyed by the Jaipur rulers in various areas at various times carefully determined. Such a study would be of great help in showing the pattern of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century, and the pattern of the development of the various princely states.

A second point which emerges is that the basic pattern of administration, even in a *pargana* such as Chatsu, generally considered a part of the Jaipur *raj*; in *pargana* Gauri, *sarkar* Narnol; in *pargana* Hindaon, *sarkar* and *subah* Akbarabad; in *pargana* Naraina, *sarkar* Sawai Jaipur, etc., seems to be the same. This confirms the tradition in Rajasthan that the Mughal pattern of administration was adopted in the time of Akbar, there being no systematic assessment (*rekh*) of villages in the earlier period.

The areas held by the Jaipur *raj* in *jagir* or *ijara* were further alienated into *jagir* or land assigned to the personal followers and relations of the rulers, *bhom*, *punyaudik*, *inam*, etc. The portion from which income was derived directly by the ruler was termed *khalisa*. The wholesale adoption of Persian revenue terminology in the records is an index of the extent of the influence of Mughal revenue practices and institutions.

Pattern of Revenue Assessment

The *arhsattas* divide the *muqarra jama* (assessment) under the following heads (also see Appendix I).

Baqaya (Arrears) and Hal Sal

A careful analysis of *baqaya* figures should help to establish firmly whether *baqaya* kept on accumulating and being added to *hal sal* or whether its proportion remained manageable. The problem is related further to computing the real magnitude of the land revenue demand and whether it was beyond the capacity of the peasant to pay.

Hal sal is divided under the following heads: (i) *mal-o-jihat*, (ii) *satr jihat*, (iii) *siwai jamabandi*. *Mal-o-jihat* is further subdivided into the following categories: *naqd* (cash) and *jinsi* (kind). Under *naqd* is included the areas under *zabt* as well as the areas given in *ijara*. A notable feature of the system is the combination

of *zabt* and *jinsi*, the latter being equated to *batai*. The proportion of *zabt* and *jinsi* varies from area to area, village to village and harvest to harvest. In the records available, there is no example of any village being wholly *zabti* or wholly *jinsi*. It is possible that this is peculiar to Rajasthan. On the other hand, it may indicate that *zabt* and *batai* were not regarded as exclusive or contradictory to each other, but were supplementary and existed side by side in most areas. However, in these records, cereals such as wheat, rice, gram, barley, jowar, etc., appear to have been under *jinsi*, while cash crops like indigo, tobacco, sugar, etc., and vegetables, *singhara*, etc., were under *zabt*. Generally speaking, *jinsi* forms the larger part of the revenue demand in most of the *parganas*. Considering that many of the *parganas* for which records are available formed a part of *subah* Delhi and *subah* Agra where *zabt* was generally considered to prevail, it seems that *zabt* developed far more slowly than has been generally believed. Another point is that *zabt* rates vary from *mauza* to *mauza* even in the same *dastur*. This suggests that the latter were merely rough figures for computing income, generally for purposes of assignment in *jagirs*.

Jinsi

The *arhsattas* make it clear that the bulk of the state's share of the *jinsi* was sold in the villages on the spot, presumably to *mahajans*. The rest was stored in what is called *ambar* or *ambari* and was either disposed of later, or transported to the capital for consumption. For purposes of accounts, the book-value of the stocks held in *ambar* was computed roughly. Prices at which sales were made in the villages are recorded in detail. Details of sale from *ambar* are probably given in *nirakh jamabandi*.

A careful analysis of the *zabt* and *batai* figures from different villages over a period of time will be of great help in showing the basic crop pattern, and the extent of the development of money economy in Rajasthan during the eighteenth century. Details of the cultivated area (*arazi raqba*) and the actual realisations have been given for each *mauza*, and detailed statistical studies of select *mauzas* can be made. *Pargana* statistics are based on *mauza* figures.[2]

[2]See Appendix II. This has been taken from the present author's article, 'A Note on Rajasthani Sources and the Rajput Agrarian System', *Readings in Indian Economic History*, B.N. Ganguli, ed. (Bombay, 1965), pp.59-63.

Cesses and Siwai-Jamabandi

The importance of cesses (*wajuhat*) in the medieval revenue administration has been frequently emphasised. A proper study and analysis of the large number of cesses levied on the peasants is of fundamental importance in calculating the total demand upon a village. From this, in turn, it may be possible to calculate the demand per *bigha* in different areas. According to some of the British observers writing in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the revenue demand in Rajasthan was low but it was supplemented by a large number of cesses which together formed about half of the total produce. However, before attempting a detailed analysis of the incidence of the cesses, some peculiarities of the *arhsattas* have to be kept in mind. The *arhsattas* give abstracts only for the areas held in *khalisa* or *ijara* by the *raj*. No detailed figures are provided for the area assigned in *jagir* or granted in *punyaudik*, *inam*, etc. Even for the areas under *khalisa*, under *mal-o-jihat* are included a number of cesses wihch were realised either in cash or in kind. For *mauzas* or part of *mauzas* assigned in *ijara*, no breakdown of the amount realised under the heads *mal* and *jihat* is provided. Finally, *siwai-jamabandi* which apparently consists of cesses levied upon the entire *pargana*, including *mauzas* assigned in *jagir*, includes such cesses as *dastur qanungoi*, *dastur chowdhari*, *dastur patwari*, *hasil chabutra kotwali*, etc. A village-wise breakdown of these cesses is given only in a few cases. However, it should be possible to select a few villages by way of sample and to calculate in each case the net revenue demand and the weight of the cesses under different heads.

Scale of Demand

A broad comparison of the scale of demand for *zabti* areas shows that the scale of demand is the same whether the *pargana* is under royal *khalisa* or assigned in *jagir* to the Jaipur rulers. In the case of *jinsi*, the rate of *batai* varied from one half to one-fourth, different rates being sometimes applied to the same crop in the same *mauza*. Broadly speaking, the share of the state comes to 40-45 per cent. This is shown by the following example of *pargana* Naraina, *s.v.* 1787 (A.D. 1730).

From the analysis (p. 8), it should be clear that the Mughal revenue system and the Mughal scale of revenue demand prevailed in Eastern Rajputana, at any rate, from the middle of the

BAJRA

	Total quantity		*Raiti's share*		*State (Diwan's) share*		
	Mds.	*Seers*	*Mds.*	*Seers*	*Mds.*	*Seers*	
	13,609	8	6,804	15	6,804	33	
	8,190	19	4,913	21	3,276	38	
	2,466	16	1,643	34	822	22	Aggregate state
	40	35	29	6	11	29	share comes to
	320	19	240	13	80	6	45 per cent.
Grand total	24,627	17	13,631	90	10,996	8	

seventeenth century onwards. Bernier's statement that the peasants were more lightly assessed in the territories controlled by the rajas and that in consequence they fled to their areas to escape from the oppression of the Mughal governors, cannot thus be applied to Eastern Rajputana.

JAGIR

Little information is available in the *arhsattas* regarding the manner in which the assessed income (*tan*) of the villages was computed in areas assigned to *jagirdars*. By a comparative study of the figures over a period of time as applicable to individual *mauzas*, it would be possible to determine whether the assessment remained fixed for a long time, whether it varied from year to year and whether it tended to rise and fall during the period. It might be pointed out that no fresh assessment seems to have been made in the Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century. Most of the revenue manuals merely repeat the figures worked out during the later part of the Mughal period. The reason for this, apparently, was that from the period of Jahandar Shah onwards, all the revenue regulations were thrown to the winds. In consequence, there must have been a growing gap between the actual income and the assessed income of the various *jagirs*. The implications of this development for the *jagirdars* could be studied only on the basis of the *jagirdars'* records which have yet to be tapped. There was apparently a preference for the assignment of a *mauza* in

entirety (*dar-o-bast*) to a single assignee. But a *mauza* could be held jointly by as many as five to six or more assignees. In such cases, the share of the major assignees would be shown as a proportion of the village, and the share of the smaller assignees was shown in cash. It is not clear if this was paid to them by the bigger assignees directly, or through the state.

It is of capital importance to analyse the position of the *jagirdars* of the *raj*, for they were intermediaries par excellence. Unlike the Mughal *jagirdars*, they claimed their tenure by right of heredity, and could not be dispossessed easily. The application of the word *jagirdar* to them in the documents suggests that the Rajput rajas were trying to emphasise that their tenure, like that of the Mughal *mansabdars*, also depended on service and loyalty. In a few cases, *jagirdars* were dismissed for not performing services due. But it is difficult, without a more detailed study, to say how widespread the phenomenon was. No details are available in the present documents regarding the service (*rekh*) imposed upon the *jagirdars*. Just as the Mughals tried to reduce big *zamindars* to the status of intermediary *zamindars*, the Jaipur rajas also tried to reduce many of the bigger chieftains (such as those of Khetri, Sikar, etc.) claiming an autonomous status, to the position of *jagirdars*, leading to a tussle and an appeal by the former to the Mughal emperors, and later to the British Government.

Bhom, Udik, Inam

According to nineteenth century British observers, *bhom* was an allodial holding which was transmitted to the descendants of those who had originally brought the land under cultivation, or those who had been displaced by later conquerors and allowed a small *bhom* by way of a subsistence allowance. It could also be granted for exceptional service, such as sacrifice in war (*shish-katai*). Relations by marriage or close relations could also be given *bhom*. Unlike *jagir*, *bhom* did not imply any service, but a nominal sum was imposed as quit rent. Though resumable in theory, it was considered a most sacred grant and was generally respected.

Udik was a grant for religious purposes. Like *bhom*, it was heritable, but was not liable even to a nominal cess. *Inam* was also rent-free.

It has been computed that in 1850 in Mewar, charity grants of

various types formed three parts out of 13½, *khalisa* being 3½ parts, and *jagir* seven. This alone shows how important charity grants could be. A careful computation of their extent in Jaipur State during the eighteenth century will show to what extent these may be regarded as having created internal problems for the rulers.

The scale of quit rent for *bhom* is shown in the *arhsatta bhom*. Generally speaking, it was about 1/16 that of the standard demand. *Bhom* lands were not exempt from the various cases. The rate of these cesses can be calculated. An interesting feature is that sometimes some of the cesses, such as *hasil chabutra kotwali*, or *ghas charai* were assigned for *punyaudik*.

IJARA

A great deal has been written on the meaning and significance of the *ijara* system. It would seem that *ijara* was of several types. We may divide it into *ijara* taken or given by the rulers. The former, again, was of two types:

(a) *Ijara* of isolated *mauzas* hold in royal *khalisa* or by imperial *mansabdars*, in areas controlled in the main by Jaipur rajas.
(b) *Ijara* of whole *parganas*, taken with the sanction of the Mughal government, because the imperial *mansabdars* and royal servants were not able to realise their dues.

The latter type of *ijara* became common in the eighteenth century, and included such *parganas* as Ranthambhor, Fatehpur, Jhunjhunun, etc. These *ijaras* were often *istimrar* (i.e., perpetual)[3] and for a fixed quit rent. They became the thin end of the wedge for claiming sovereignty later on.

The *ijaras* granted by the rulers were also of two broad types:

(a) *Ijaras* granted to important *thikanedars*, such as Sikar, Khetri, etc. Generally speaking many of these were in areas which had formerly been under imperial control, many of them holding *zamindari* rights of *ijaras* directly from the Mughal government.

Many of these *ijaras* were also *istimrar* and for a fixed

[3] *Ijara istimrar* was *not* a grant in perpetuity, but a long term grant as distinct from a short term grant (S.C.).

quit rent, though disputes for the fixation of the latter often continued for long periods. *Ijaras* for two to three years were also fairly common and could be shared by two or more persons. These grantees were invariably required to produce a guarantor, who was generally a *mahajan*.

(b) *Ijara* for a *mauza* or a part of a *mauza*, given for a year or a single harvest, generally to the *patel* of the *mauza* concerned. *Ijara* in this form was undoubtedly an old practice. The *patels*, presumably, were local *zamindars*, and collected rent from other local *zamindars* and peasants. Their actual collections are not recorded. They were entitled to some cesses, such as *pateli*, etc.

Pattern of Administration

The nineteenth century estimate that in Rajputana, the *qanungo*, *chowdhary*, etc., had a depressed status is apparently not correct for the eighteenth century. The *Pargana Records* frequently refer to these officials. The state collected cesses called *dastur qanungo*, *chowdhari*, etc., in all the *mauzas*, whether in *khalisa*, or assigned in *jagir* for their payment. They also enjoyed *nankar*. Other local officials were the *amin*, *amil*, *potdar*, *khazanchi*, etc.

Prices

There is sufficient material in the Jaipur *Pargana Records* to enable a detailed study of local prices of food grains, cash crops, etc., from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, and also to compute the relative prices of cash crops to food grains and of copper, silver and gold to each other. This would be an extremely useful supplement to information in European sources which supply information regarding the movement of prices in the coastal areas.

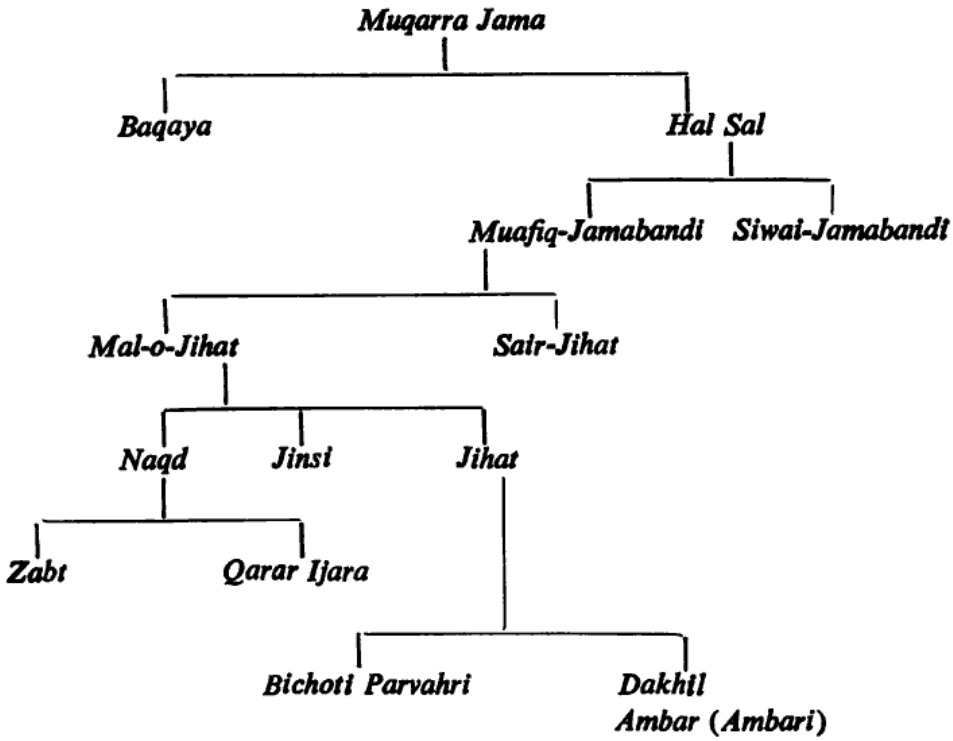
Enough has been said, it is hoped, to indicate that the Jaipur *Pargana Records* open up the prospect of studying the actual working of the revenue system in medieval India in its basic units, viz., the *pargana* and the *mauza*. A study of this kind will pose many problems of statistical analysis of a type that have not so far been faced by students of medieval Indian history. Fortunately, the development of statistics and the computer place in

our hands invaluable tools for making a study of this kind. For purposes of statistical analysis, the method will have to be one of random sampling, viz., collecting statistics on the basis of *mauzas* chosen at random from a large number of *parganas*, bringing the statistics together on a common chosen basis and then working out the trends on its basis. Such a study will provide, it is hoped, authoritative and reliable guidance on such basic problems of medieval economy as the crop pattern, productivity, land utilisation, incidence of demand, etc. It will also help in determining the trends in the growth of a money economy, and throw light on economic trends, or what has been called the agrarian crisis of the Mughal Empire.

While no definite conclusions can be arrived at till such a statistical analysis has been made, a preliminary study suggests that there was no substantial difference in the pattern of administration and the scale of revenue demand in Eastern Rajputana between areas assigned to the Jaipur rajas as *watan jagir* or taken by the on *ijara*, and the parts in the control of the Mughal empire. Further, typical features of a growing agrarian crisis—the accumulation of progressively larger unpaid balances (*baqaya*), the growth in the number of nominal (*dakhli*) and deserted (*wiran, kharaba*) villages and the decline of land revenue over a long period of years—do not seem to be present in the region in the period under review, i.e., from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, but they may have been present more specifically during the first half of the eighteenth century.[4]

[4]This was written before a detailed study of revenue records of Eastern Rajasthan showed that agricultural production did *not* decline in Eastern Rajasthan during the first part of the eighteenth century (S.C.).

APPENDIX I



Note: The entire *jamabandi* of a *mauza* could be given in *ijara* for one harvest, and assessed in another, or a part or whole of the *zabt* area could lie in *ijara*. No instances have yet come to light when a part of the *jinsi* area might have been given in *ijara*.

APPENDIX II

ARHSATTAS OF PARGANA CHATSU SAMVAT 1721 (A.D. 1664) FROM THE KHARIF CROP NAQDI (CASH)

Zabti[a]

Crop	*Area*		*Amount*		
	Bigha	*Biswa*	*Rs*	*As*	*Pice*
Total under *zabti*	15,231	2	13,127	13	2
Baranji (Rice)	11,528	1	9,465	1	0
Chaula[b]	622	5	604	0	0
Kodu (*Kodon*)[c]	269	12	224	14	0
Phaguni[c]	8	0	6	12	0
Hemp	241	16	193	8	2
Ajwain	165	1	182	3	2
Indigo	619	19	855	6	0
Vegetables	72	16	80	14	2
Sugarcane	4	8	8	1	0
Arzan (Millet)	1	2	0	9	0
Sweet Potato (*Shakar-kand*)	2	2	3	8	2
Tobacco	1	2	2	7	2
Rali[d]	15	10	17	4	2
Maka-Jawar	31	17	35	9	0
Mahua	512	3	566	3	2
Barati[e]	1,012	13	844	13	0
Mehndi	22	5	36	10	0

[a]Area under *zabti* or measurement
[b]A kind of bean, *Dolichos sinensis*
[c]A small grain
[d]A coarse grain resembling *bajra*
[e]A variety of millet

Aiwaz Jinsi[a]

Crop		Amount in weight		Amount in money		
		Mds.	*Seers*	*Rs*	*As*	*Pice*
Total		1,46,464	9	1,04,413	1	0
Bajra		94,463	6	62,431	6	0
Shali rice		1,343	10¼	933	3	2
Kali	1,180-22¼			806-10-0		
Lavdari	162-28			125- 9-2		
Total	1,343-10¼			932- 3-2		
Kondon		2,931	6½	1,483	9	2
Urd		648	30½	662	3	0
Til		3,820	24½	8,373	2	2
Singhara[b]		52	33½	72	5	2
Chaula		160	3½	141	2	2
Gunwar		256	19	111	9	2
Indigo		0	24½	53	0	0
Indigo Seed		0	3	1	0	0
Garad		2,674	22	3,262	5	2
Jowar		15,887	7¼	10,027	15	2
Mung		997	30½	1,111	10	0
Moth		20,894	32½	15,543	0	2
Mahua		11	8	7	0	2
Barati		421	30½	198	14	2
Rali		0	10	0	2	2

[a]This represents the value in cash of land revenue realised in kind
[b]Details have been omitted

II

Some Documents Pertaining to Zamindari and Thikana Records in the Former Jaipur State

THE IMPORTANCE of the *thikana* papers for a study of the pattern of *zamindari* in Rajasthan needs hardly to be emphasised. The *thikanas*, some of which date back to the early Mughal period, or even earlier, were administrative cum socio-economic units. They were generally held free of feudal dues, only a quit rent being paid to the ruler concerned. Most of them were members of the ruler's own family, but a few consisted of estates either conquered or possessed by the ancestors of the existing holders prior to their conquest by the reigning family. Thus, in the former Jaipur State, the estates of the chiefs of Sikar, Khetri, Uniara, etc., were anterior to its conquest by the Rajawat clan of the Kachchawas. The oldest in time was Patan in Torawati, which descended from the ancient Tuar (Tomar) rulers of Delhi. The process of the expansion of the Jaipur house over these areas has been studied by a number of scholars. Generally speaking, in most of the cases, the Jaipur rulers managed to take over the areas in *ijara istimrar*, either by persuasion or force, and gradually incorporated them into their territories as the power of the Mughal emperor declined. Thus, the *tappa* of Patan, situated in *pargana* Gaonri, was obtained in *ijara* by Sawai Jai Singh from Muzaffar Khan, the *faujdar* of Narnaul, in 1730. Generally speaking, such areas passed through a process of sub-infeudation, being in turn sub-contracted by the rulers to one or more persons in *ijara*.

Published in the *Procs. IHC* XXIX (1967), pp. 261-5.

From the Patan papers and other records, we learn that in 1731, Gaonri was given by the Jaipur ruler in *ijara* to Hari Singh Chhabra, but the following year it was made *khalisa* to the *darbar*. In 1733 and 1734, it was given in *ijara* to Mirza Babar Beg. In 1735, half of it was *khalisa* and half in *ijara* with Sheo Singh Shekhawat, while in 1736 it passed to Dalal Singh Rajawat for three years. The position of Rao Bakshiram, the *zamindar* of *tappa* Patan, does not seem to have been disturbed during this period. The attempt of Rao Bakshiram to obtain the *ijara* of *pargana* Patan (a new unit which included *tappa* Patan with other adjoining areas) for a sum of Rs 75,000 was refused, the offer of Dalal Singh Rajawat for Rs 55,000 being preferred, obviously on political grounds. Subsequently, in a document in 1740, we see Bakshiram being ousted from his *zamindari* for irregularity of payment to Dalal Singh. However, two years later, in 1742, Jai Singh grants half of Patan, while Bakshiram was still alive, in *zamindari* to his son Ranjit Singh with instructions to pay half the *ijara* which his father had been paying.

It would thus appear that the Jaipur rulers claimed full rights in appointment and dismissal of *zamindars*, even in territories held in *ijara istimrar*. The relations between the subordinate *ijaradars* and the *zamindars* of the area, their relationships with the ruler, the growth of *zamindari* in the area under the impact of the *ijara* system, etc., are important for understanding the social processes at work in the seveneenth century. While most of the *thikana* records have not yet been opened to scholars, a few documents have been made available. The Directorate of State Archives, Rajasthan, has made a sample survey of some of these private archives. A few documents from Patan and a number of other *thikanas* in Jaipur division are given below to illustrate the nature of the sources in these *thikanas*, with particular reference to *zamindari*.

Agreement written in 1092 H/1681 by *muqaddams* and *muzarian* of *pargana* Malpur for grant of the *zamindari* of the *pargana* to Hari Singh Khangarot.

Seal of Muhammad Dayam, servant of the Faith (*khadim-i-shara*), 1092/A.D. 1681.

The seal was fixed in accordance with the wish of the persons who agreed (to this document).

The reason for writing these lines is that all the *muqaddams* and *muzarian* of *pargana* Todri, known as Malpur, of our own desire and wish entrust the *zamindari* of our entire *pargana* to the brave and gallant Hari Singh Khangarot (*zamindari-i-tamam pargana khudra ba raza-wa-raghbati-i-khesh banam-i-tahawwur wa bisalat dastgah* Hari Singh Khangarot *muqarrar kardem*), and promise that whatever customary cesses (*dastur*), and *bhaum* and *zamindari* dues on *mal-o-jihat* and *sayar jihat* on the said *pargana* appertain, we shall pay without any hesitation or excuse, from crop to crop, and year to year at the village designated. Every one of us, and our sons and descendants deeming the *zamindari* and *bhaumia* to be the permanent (right) of the aforementioned, shall pay the *zamindari* dues (*wajah zamindari*) to his sons according to custom. If perchance (any one of us) demur in this regard, he will be held sinful in the eyes of *shara-sharif*. Therefore these few lines have been written as an agreement and made over as proof for the future.

(Names of *muqaddams* of the villages)

The grant of *zamindari* rights to the original cultivator of the soil, either by clearing forests, or sinking a well, or making an embankment is well known. The grant of *zamindari* rights for political and administrative purposes is also well known. However, from the above, it would appear that *zamindari* rights could be granted for maintenance of law and order, in agreement with and at the request of the local inhabitants. Hari Singh, it seems, already held the *parganas* Fatehpur and Kansali as *jagir al-tamgha* free of *peshkash*.[1] He, therefore, wanted to extend his *zamindari talluqa*.[2] But the attempt to do so with the concurrence and approval of the local *muqaddams*, etc., appears to be novel.

The agreement of the inhabitants regarding the grant of *zamindari* to Hari Singh was confirmed by the emperor in a *farman* dated 15th *Ramzan*, R.Y. 25/28th Oct. 1681, addressed to the '*chaudhris, qanungos*, and *riaya wa baraya* of *pargana* Malpur'.

[1]Vide Sikar Document dated 1131 H.R.Y.I/1719 under the seal of Mir Jumla Muazzam Khan Khanan Motamid-ul-Mulk Bahadur Muzaffar Jung, servant of Muhammed Shah.

[2]A copy of the same document, with minor variations, is to be found in Sikar Document No. 14. The dates of both these documents in English are, however, wrong.

After stating that 'it has come to our notice that the *zamindari* of the villages and town (*qasba*) of Malpur, has been given (*muqarrar namudah*) to Hari Singh in accordance with their request and agreement', it goes on to say that the reason of the grant was that Hari Singh, who had 'taken great pains and undergone many trials at the time of the expulsion of disturbers (*mufsidan*) and engaged himself and his forces for protecting the honour of the local inhabitants and established peace for the *riaya* of the *pargana* and in the villages in that quarter (and that) the inhabitants (*riaya wa baraya*) have of their accord allotted the *rasum-i-zamindari* of the villages and *qasba* to Hari Singh.' However, it adds that Hari Singh also had in his possession a *sanad* from the previous diwans (for these villages), (*Dar-in-ada sanad-i-diwaniyan-i-sabiq neez masharun-alah bah dast darad*).

From a further document (Sikar Document No. 14, dated 25 *Rajab* R.Y. 37/12 March, 1694) the *zamindari* of Malpur *pargana* was confirmed to Gaj Singh, son of Hari Singh, 'in accordance with the *sanads* of previous officers and their (*chaudhris, muqaddams*, and *riaya wa baraya*) request and agreement (*bah-maujib-i-asnad-i-hukkam-i-sabiq wa istadua wa razinama-i-anha*)'.

From a number of documents from *thikana* Sikar, we see sharing of *ijara* and *zamindari* between a number of parties. Thus, in *samvat* 1791/1734, Sheo Singh and Guman Singh Shekhawat stated that they had been granted four *pattis* of Fatehpur, which had been confiscated to the *sarkar* in *zamindari* and that they had taken them in *ijara* (*Fatehpur ki patti char sarkar men zabat chhi so mhane zamindari bakshi wa ijara hasil kio*) with effect from *samvat* 1791, and promised to pay the amount detailed below, year by year and collect from the villages the revenue collection and *zamindari* dues (*gawan ki hasil wa zamindari*). The amount to be paid was Rs 30,000 for *samvat* 1791, Rs 40,000 for the next, and Rs 50,000 the third year. Thereafter, the payment would be Rs 50,000 per year. Sheo Singh was to hold a three-fourths share and Guman Singh Shekhawat Ladhkani a one-fourth share. A *sahukar* was required to furnish a surety every year on *Asauj Badil* in proportion to the share of each. The *darbar* was not to interfere in the villages since the villages had been granted in entirety (*daro-bast*). If, however, the parties failed to provide a surety on the date fixed, the *pattis* would be made *khalisa* the same year.

It appears from the above that land revenue and *zamindari* and

bhaum dues were to be levied separately on the cultivators. But more evidence would be needed to settle this point.

While *zamindari* and *ijara istimrari* could be combined or held separately, another practice was to grant the whole *pargana* minus the headquarter town (*qasba*). Thus, in a document dated *Pos Badi* 12 *samvat* 1796/25 January 1739 from Maharaja Sawai Singh to Sheo Singh Shekhawat, the latter is informed that while *pargana* Fatehpur had been granted to him in *zamindari* and *ijara istimrari* for Rs 60,000 (a two-fifths share being given to Ram Singh Shekhawat), the headquarter town would come under the direct management of the *darbar* the next year (*qasba sarkar men rehelo*) though he should protect the town so that the Rathors and Qaim Khanis may not take possession of it.

It is thus apparent that the study of the *thikana* records is very valuable for a further understanding of the working and development of the various *zamindari* rights in Rajasthan during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

III

Structure and Stratification in the Village Society in Eastern Rajasthan

VERY LITTLE information is so far available regarding the extent of landholdings of different categories of peasants in medieval India, details of the number, composition, etc., of households in a village and the nature of the agricultural resources, such as bullocks. Recently we came across certain documents in the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner, which throw interesting light on some of these problems. Some of these papers are being introduced below in order that a more diligent search for and study of documents of this nature may be carried out.

The first of the documents is a *yad-dashti*[1] dated *v.s.* 1723/1666 pertaining to *pargana* Chatsu in the former state of Jaipur.

The document gives the following information regarding the *pargana*:

Total no. of *mauzas*	82
Ijara	4
Balance	78

Details of land in 78 mauzas

Total land	4,14,968 *bighas*
River, ravines and uncultivable land	58,974 *bighas*
Cultivable land (*qabil zaraat*)	3,55,994 *bighas*
Inam	30,843 *bighas*
Balance	3,25,151 *bighas*

Published in conjunction with Dilbagh Singh in *Procs., I.H.C.* XXXIII (1972), pp. 196-203.

[1] *Yad-dashti Hal Bail Jubani Patel Patwari Pargana Chatsu*, dated *v.s.* 1723.

Out of 3,25,151 *bighas* of cultivable land in the previous year, the land under the plough was 2,30,522 *bighas*, and 94,629 *bighas* were fallow land, indicating that a high precentage of the land was actually under cultivation.

The total number of *asamis* (peasants or peasant households) was 2,548 and the number of bullocks at their disposal 6,200. This would show that on a rough average, there were slightly less than 130 *bighas* of cultivable land available per peasant (*asami*), and that each *asami* had an average of 2.5 bullocks at his disposal. However, when we come to the figures for a particular village, the picture undergoes a change. Thus for *qasba* Chatsu, the figures are as follows:

Total land	30,250 *bighas*
Ponds, habitation	13,047 *bighas*
Cultivable land	23,203 *bighas*
Inam	5,303 *bighas*
Balance	17,900 *bighas*

Out of 17,900 *bighas*, only 9,000 *bighas* were under the plough the previous year, leaving 8,900 *bighas* as fallow land—a high proportion. There were 200 *asamis* with 422 bullocks, the breakdown being as follows:

TABLE I: QASBA CHATSU

Total no. of *asamis*	200	Bullocks	422
Actual no. of *asamis* present in the previous year	193	Bullocks	405

Caste	*No. of asamis*	*No. of bullocks*
Mali	70	123
Gujar	8	18
Teli	28	51
Brahmin	51	115
Lodha	5	17
Kumhar	4	11
Kayastha	5	11
Rajput	3	12
Deswali	3	10
Meena	2	2
Nagori	14	35
Izafa in the current year	7	17
Total	200	422

From Table I it is apparent that there was a considerable difference in the economic position of the different castes. The Rajputs were in the best position, each *asami* having an average of four bullocks, while the worst off were the Meenas who had only one bullock each, which was insufficient for normal cultivation. Among the better off sections were the Lodhas, Deswalis and Nagoris who had an average of three bullocks each. The rest, the Malis, Gujars, Telis, Brahmins, and Kayasthas had two bullocks each. Perhaps the Brahmins and Kayasthas had other means of income or were assessed at a lower rental, leaving the Malis, Telis, Gujars and Meenas among the worst off sections.

From the viewpoint of composition of the population, the Rajputs form only about 1.5 per cent, and the Lodhas, Deswalis and Nagoris with three bullocks per head constitute 22 households or about 10 per cent.

Thus, the poorer sections, i.e., those who had two bullocks or less, make up 94 households or almost 50 per cent if we exclude the Brahmins and Kayasthas, and more if we include them. Obviously, this cannot be regarded as a reliable projection. Much more information would be needed before a tentative structure can be visualised.

The composition of the peasant population according to another document[2] of the year *v.s.* 1783/A.D. 1726 relating to *pargana* Wazirpur[3] is shown in Table II. Four of the bigger villages have been taken as a working basis.

Thus, for the 249 households inhabiting these *mauzas*, the breakdown is as follows.

Category I. Privileged sections

Mahajans	16
Qanungos	2
Rajputs	2
Brahmins	14
Total	34 households or about 13 per cent

[2] *Yad-dashti Ghar Pargana Wazirpur* dated *v.s.* 1783. The figures for other smaller villages are also available but they have been left out.

[3] *Pargana* Wazirpur was in the *sarkar* and *subah* of Akbarabad.

TABLE II

Caste	No. of households in Village Kusawa	Village Kishorpur	Village Pauta	Village Pahiri	Total 1 to 4
	1	2	3	4	5
Mahajan	3	1	6	6	16
Qanungo	1	—	1	—	2
Meena	4	31	3	29	67
Jat	20	—	—	—	20
Brahmin	5	2	—	7	14
Kumhar	1	1	—	—	2
Muslim	1	2	47	—	50
Koli	2	8	11	5	26
Chamar	4	8	6	5	23
Rajput	2	—	—	—	2
Khati	2	—	2	1	5
Jogi	1	—	—	—	1
Mali	—	1	4	1	6
Luhar	—	1	—	—	1
Valahi	—	1	—	2	3
Sunar	—	—	1	1	2
Kandera	—	—	3	1	4
Teli	—	—	1	1	2
Dhobi	—	—	1	—	1
Cheepa	—	—	—	1	1
Nai	—	—	—	1	1
Total	46	56	86	61	249

Category II. Cultivating classes

Meenas	67
Muslims	50
Kolis	26
Chamars	23
Jats	20
Total	186 or about 76 per cent

Category III. Service classes

Potters, Carpenters, Gardeners, Ironsmiths, Goldsmiths, Tanners, Oil-pressers, Dhobis, Barbers, etc. . . .29 or 11 per cent.

There seems to be a broad correspondence between caste and status. Interestingly enough, the Muslims are a part of the cultivating classes. There is a strong suggestion that some of these Muslims must have been peasants from the lower strata who had changed their religion in an effort to improve their social status. The privileged and the service classes are roughly equal and constitute about a quarter of the population of the villages.

A third set of *yad-dashti* documents[4] relates to village settlements. A document dated *v.s.* 1783/1726 sets out the history of the villages in *pargana* Malarana where a new settlement has been made. A few sample documents are being given below.

Mauza Maharajpur. This village had been deserted in the past. Two *paltis*[5] came to settle in the village in the years of *v.s.* 1779 and 1780 (A.D. 1722, 1723). They carried on cultivation in the village but due to the failure of rainfall in the year of *v.s.* 1781 (A.D. 1724) and scarcity of water because of the drying up of wells, ponds and river in the village, the *paltis* had to migrate to the village of Sancholi Varnala. They settled down there and carried on cultivation. Now the settlement has been done as follows:

The *patel* of the village was asked to settle in the village and was required to give an undertaking to the effect that he would bring the entire land of the village under the plough. He was granted a *patta* on concessional terms and the land revenue demand was settled upon him at the rate of one-third of the produce for a period of three years. The new settlers in the village would be charged revenue at the rate of one-third for a period of three years. The *pahi-kashts* were granted *patta* stating the land revenue demand at the rate of one-third of the produce for the current year. Thus, the village has been rehabilitated.

Mauza Kilanpur. Twenty new *asamis* have been brought to this village. Bhawalo, Hari Singh, Dhanji, Dayalo of the village of Jaterawata; Hira of the village of Maniwa; Rupa of the village of Distana; Udai Singh, Kharga and Kashi of the village of Chandlai; Ghasi of the village of Jawavata; Sisram of the village of Chandali;

[4] *Yad-dashti Pradakhti Gaon Pargana Malarana, v.s.* 1783.

[5] The term *palti* was used for cultivators, both proprietors and tenants, belonging to inferior castes such as Mali, Gujar, Jat, Ahir, Meena, etc.

and Mohan of the village of Jawavata: all these *pahis* belonging to the *parganas* have been settled in this village. The land revenue demand has been settled upon them as follows:

Syalu (*kharif*) *unhalu* (*rabi*) seasons of the year of *v.s.* 1784 (1727): at the rate of one-third of the produce.

Syalu (*kharif*) *unhalu* (*rabi*) seasons of the year of *v.s.* 1785 (1728): at the rate of two-fifths of the produce.

The above mentioned *asamis* have also brought their families. Therefore, they have been granted *pattas* on concessional rates. They have brought 15 new ploughs for *gharu-hala*[6] cultivation.

Ranmal (and eight other names), *pahis* belonging to other *parganas* have also been settled in the village.

Mauza Pipalwara Koh. In this village cultivation was being carried on by the *pahis* in the past and there was no habitation in the village. Diwan Vidhyadhar granted the *pateli* of this village to the *kheldar* of *qasba* Malarana and the amount of *peshkash* was also settled upon them. Meanwhile, the former *patel* of the village asked that he should be permitted to settle in the village. He was settled in the village and two huts were constructed by him. He pursued cultivation in the *syalu* (*kharif*) seasons but deserted the village in the spring. The crop of gram was cultivated by two *asamis*. The amount paid by them as *hasil* was deposited with the *sarkar*. Now the settlement has been done as follows:

The *kheldar* of the *qasba* were invited in the month of *Jeth* and a sum of Rs 125 was settled upon them as *peshkash*. They were entrusted with the task of rehabilitating the village, and were granted a *patta* fixing one-third of the produce for a period of three years. The claimant *patel* came again and requested that he be allowed to settle in the village and also to cultivate the entire lands, promising to settle four (additional) households in the village. The *amil* told him that he was incapable of rehabilitating the village, whereupon he undertook not to leave the village again. He has also been required to pay a sum of Rs 90 as *taksirana* (fine) because of his previous default, the amount to be paid in three instalments of Rs 30 each per year. He has been granted a *patta* on concessional rate.

[6]The term *gharu hala* stands for the *khud-kasht* cultivators who carried on cultivation with the help of ploughs owned by them, and with the help of members of the family.

Mauza Woharkhi. Ten new ploughs have been brought to the village. Goha *purohit* of the *qasba* of Livali and some others have come to settle in the village to carry on cultivation of the fallow land. A demand of one-third of the produce has been settled upon them. Narayan Meena has been resettled in the village; he would pay at the rate of two-fifths of the produce. Dayaram Meena of the village of Gothra, Mayaram of the village of Nivod Sarai, Mano Mahajan of the village of Samota and Bhagirath of the village of Pipalda, all these *pahis* belonging to other *parganas* have been settled in the village. They will pay on the *polaj* land at the rate of two-fifths of the produce and on the *banjar* land at the rate of one-third of the produce.

Hari Singh and seven other *asamis* had migrated to Jaduwati due to harassment by Bhomias. They were encouraged and have been resettled in the village. They have been granted a *patta* fixing the demand at two-fifths of the produce.

Mauza Khanpur. There are 13 new ploughs in the village. Raghunath Mahajan of the village of Tejpur in *pargana* Livali has been settled in the village and will pay at the rate of two-fifths of the produce. Bihari of the village of Bhitali, Bakhto Brahmin of the village of Bras, Parmanand of *pargana* Salavad, Patho of *pargana* Lalsot, Jagannath of the village of Banohari and Ramrai of the village of Dagoh; all these new *pahis* have been settled in the village. They would pay revenue at the rate of two-fifths of the produce and have brought six ploughs.

Dayaram Rajput of the village of Banohari who is carrying on cultivation in the village would pay at the rate of one-third of the produce and has brought three ploughs. Narhar, Kishno, Hemraj and others—five *asamis* of the village of Magpari—pay at the rate of one-third of the produce and have brought four ploughs.

Mauza Palasod. The land cultivated by Guman Singh Naruka and others would be charged at the following rates of the produce:

Guman Singh Naruka and five other *asamis* at the rate of one-fourth of the produce.

Rajputs of any class at the rate of one-third of the produce. Kojaram Purohit, Pamo Mahajan at the rate of one-third of the produce. Meenas, Gujars, Jats, etc., at the rate of two-fifths of the produce.

From the above documents it is clear that there was keen competiton for attracting new cultivators or *pahis* to villages where there was cultivable waste land available (*banjar*) or which had been deserted. The main method of attracting the *pahis* was to offer them a settlement extending over a period of two to three years, fixing a concessional rate for the payment of land revenue by them. The *pahis* often came from neigbouring villages or neighbouring *parganas*. The reasons for their migration are generally not mentioned—only in one case has it been said that the *pahis* left the village due to harassment by the Bhomias. It would appear that the prospect of settlement at a lower rate was the chief inducement for the *pahis* to migrate. The village *patel* was expected to play an important role in attracting new *asamis*. Sometimes the new *asamis* or *pahis* brought their ploughs with them, a fact which was important enough to be recorded.

It would appear that the standard revenue demand in the area was two-fifths of the produce on *polaj* land and one-third of the produce on *banjar* land. The *pahis* were generally asked to pay one-third of the produce over a period of two to three years on *polaj* land. A similar concession was given to the village *patel* and to the superior sections such as the Kachhawa Rajputs and Brahmins.

The documents illustrate many of the practices which have been set out in some of the official documents of the period. They show the crucial importance of the *patel* in the normal administration and economic growth of a village, and the importance of the study of internal migrations in the process.

IV

The Structure of Village Society in Northern India: The Khud-Kasht and Pahi-Kasht

SINCE THE beginning of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, considerable attention has been devoted by administrators and scholars to understand the structure and functioning of Indian village society. Interest in the subject has continued and evoked a lively controversy among scholars.[1] While the view that Indian villages were 'petty republics' is not accepted, there can be little doubt that the village was an administrative and revenue unit in medieval India and that a study of the structure and working of village society is vital for an understanding of the evolution of Indian society during the period.

Based on a paper read at the International Congress of Orientalists, XXIX Session, Paris, July 1973. The revised version was published in the *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974, pp. 51-64, and *Essays in Honour of Prof. S.C. Sarkar* (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 245-64.

[1]Recent publications include A.R. Desai, *Rural Sociology in India* (Bombay, 1961); Henry Oremstein, *Gaon-Conflict and Cohesion in an Indian Village* (Princeton University, 1965); S.C. Gupta, *Agrarian Relations and the Early British Rule in India* (Delhi, 1954), and 'The Village Community and its Disintegration in U.P. in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', Seminar on Indian Economic History (Delhi, 1961); B.M. Batra, 'Disintegration of Village Communities', Seminar on Indian Economic History; B.R. Grover, 'The Concept of Village Community in North India during the Mughal Age and the Pre-British Era', Seminar paper, Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Simla, 1964). Recent Soviet studies on the subject include the works of I.M. Reisner, L.B. Alaev, K.A. Antanova, E.N. Komarov, G.G. Kotovsky, etc., to cite only a few. For bibliography see A.I. Chicherov, *India: Economic Development in the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries, Outline History of Crafts and Trade* (Moscow, 1971).

The study of agrarian life and conditions during the medieval period in India, particularly the nature of *zamindari* rights, has received considerable attention from Indian scholars during recent times.[2] These studies have shown that while the possession of land vested in the individual peasants, in reality, possession implied the right to the fruits produced by land. It will be seen that the medieval Indian concept of ownership in land was similar in many respects to the medieval European concept.[3] It would imply collective use or the right of different parties to a share of the produce. It was alien to the capitalist idea of exclusive control and of the right to use or abuse. Secondly, these studies have underlined the close linkage of *zamindari* rights with the settlement pattern of castes and clans on the land. *Zamindars*, it has been shown, were often drawn from dominant castes or clans, and the nature of their rights in land varied with the nature of caste/clan rights.[4] Due to the purchase of *zamindari* rights, particularly from the sixteenth century onwards, administrative appointments to *zamindaris* by rulers tended to undermine or weaken clan rights, and also the rights of the village *biradari* or community.[5] In this context feudal control over land was becoming more pronounced.

[2]See in particular S. Nurul Hasan, 'The Position of the Zamindars in Mughal Empire', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1964, pp. 107-19; 'Three Studies of the Zamindari System', *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Vol. I (Bombay, 1968), pp. 233-9; 'Aspects of Zamindari System in the Deccan', *Procs. IHC* (1969), pp. 262-6; *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India* (New Delhi, 1973); Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963); B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1963, pp. 1-23 and 'Nature of *Dehat-i-Taaluqa* and Evolution of the *Taaluqdari* System during Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1965, pp. 166-77, 259-88; N.A. Siddiqi, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals (1700-1750)*, (Bombay, 1971); Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740* (Aligarh, 1959; 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1971).

[3]Cf. S. Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations*, pp. 3-4; Marc Bloch says: 'It is very rare, during the whole of the feudal era, for anyone to speak of ownership, either of an estate or of an office . . . for nearly all land and a great many human beings were burdened at this time with a multiplicity of obligations differing in their nature but all apparently of equal importance. None implied that fixed proprietary exclusiveness which belongs to the conception of ownership in Roman law.' *Feudal Society* (London, 1967), pp. 115-16.

[4]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 162-8.

[5]Ibid., pp. 181-2.

The purpose of the present paper is to analyse the position of different classes of cultivators who formed the overwhelming majority in the villages. It does not purport to deal with the *zamindars*, *deshmukhs*, etc., or with what have been called *jajmani* rights, i.e., the relationship between the cultivating and non-cultivating classes.[6]

Late medieval documents, particularly the Rajasthani and Marathi ones, as well as the early British documents, enable us to form a fairly clear idea of the rights and obligations of various classes of cultivators and their role in agricultural production. These documents speak of two main classes of cultivators, the *khud-kasht* and the *pahi-kasht*. There is little doubt that these represented traditional divisions, the *khud-kasht* being the Persian version of the *thani* (Sanskrit: *sthanika*) or the resident-cultivator. The word *pahi* is apparently an Indian word. It was well known in medieval times and is referred to as early as the sixteenth century in the writings of the Hindi poets, Tulsidas and Surdasa.[7]

[6] A great deal of attention has been paid, particularly by sociologists, to analyse this problem at the village level. See for instance T.O. Beidelman, *A Comparative Analysis of the Jajmani System* (New York, 1959); Edward B. Harper, 'The System of Economic Exchange in India', *American Anthropologists*, Vol. lxi, 1959; David F. Pocock, 'Notes on Jajmani Relationships', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, No. VI, December 1962; P.M. Kolenda, 'Towards a Model of the Hindu Jajmani System' *Human Organisation*, XXII. However, it should be remembered that the non-cultivating sections (called *balutedar* in Western India, *ayagar* in South India, and *khidamati parja* or *kamin* in North India) formed only a small part of the village population, the agriculturists forming the large majority. For a recent review of the vast literature on the subject see John Adams and Uwe J. Woltenmade, 'Studies of Indian Village Economies', *IESHR*, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1970, pp. 109-37. It conspicuously leaves out the Soviet writings on the subject.

[7] Savitri Chandra, 'Social Life in the Age of Akbar as Depicted in the Works of Tulsidas', paper presented at the seminar on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Fatehpur Sikri, 2-3 December 1972; revised version in *Tulsidasa*: *His Mind and Art*, ed. Dr Nagendra (New Delhi, 1977), p. 183. Earlier, the word was used by Surdasa. See Savitri Chandra, 'Rural Life as Reflected in the Works of Surdasa', paper presented at seminar on 'Urban-Rural Relationship in Medieval India' at the Jamia Millia, Delhi, 1979. (Reference added: S.C.) In one version of Khwaja Yasin's *Glossary of Administrative and Revenue Terms*, written in the second half of the eighteenth century, *pahi* is called a Hindi word (Purnea MS f. 53b, Rotograph Copy, Dept. of History, Aligarh Muslim University), but in another version (Br. Mus. Add MS. 6603, f. 52a) the word

In Maharashtra, the words used for these two categories were *thalwahik* or *mirasi* and *upari* or *gutkuli* or *kulwari*. In Rajasthan the words used were *gaveti* or *gharuhala* and *pahi*. The British found a similar classification in Bengal. Thus these categories were not confined to a particular region, but were found all over North India. It is likely that similar sections among cultivators existed in South India also.

The word *khud-kasht* is self explanatory. It means cultivation by peasants themselves, evidently with the help of family labour, of lands which they owned. There is little doubt that ownership of land on a hereditary basis by large sections of the peasantry was an old and well-established tradition, as was recognised in the *Ain*.[8] A late eighteenth century revenue manual[9] defines the *khud-kasht* as 'one who, having paid himself the money (*zar*) for (the purchase of) oxen, etc., gets the cultivation done by the peasants (*riaya*)...He is the opposite of *pahi-kasht*, that is, one who has a house in the land of his zamindari and who engages in cultivation there is called *khud-kasht*.' It sums it up by saying, 'if the owner of land (*malik-i-zamin*) cultivates his own land, he is called *khud-kasht*.' Thus the ownership of the land he cultivates and of the oxen and other means of cultivation as well as possession of a house within the *zamindari* are the characteristic features of a *khud-kasht*. This is certainly the cultivator to whom Warren Hastings referred in a note dated 12 November 1776. He says:

> It is to be observed also that there are two kinds of *riatta*: the more valuable are those who reside in one fixed spot, where they have built themselves substantial houses, or derived them by inheritance from their fathers. These men will suffer much before they will abandon their habitations, and therefore, they are made to suffer much. But once forced to quit them they become vagrant *riatts*.[10]

After the conquest of the Peshwa's territories in 1815, Elphinstone ordered a special enquiry into the various tenures, particularly the *miras* tenure, which, as we have noted, may be equated

is *pai-kasht* and is called a Persian word. In Steingass's *Persian-English Dictionary*, 4th edn. (London, 1957) the word is spelt in the same way, but its origin is not given.

[8]Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr. Jarrett, Vol. II (Calcutta, 1873-94) pp. 55-6.

[9]Khwaja Yasin's *Glossary*, Purnea MS. ff. 72b, 53b.

[10]*Hastings Papers*, Br. Mus. European Add. MSS. 19090.

to the *khud-kasht* tenure. Capt. Briggs, Political Agent in Khandesh, explained the position as follows:

> The *Wattandars*, or *Mirasi Rayat*, hold their land of right: it is also hereditary, saleable, or transferable and on the occasion of its alienation from the family, title-deeds are made out and witnessed, not only by the military authorities but the *Deshmukhs* of thed istrict and several of the surrounding *Patils* are called upon to be present at the transaction. The *Wattandars* adhere to their lands and village in spite of oppression and cruelty, provided their land tenure is not interfered with.[11]

Elphinstone added that they paid a fixed land tax to the government and that they were never dispossessed while they paid their tax, 'and even then, they have for a long period (at least 30 years) the right of reclaiming their estate, on paying the dues of government.'[12]

Thus, a *khud-kasht* or a *mirasdar* was a peasant who owned the land he cultivated and the oxen and other means of cultivation, had resided for a long time in the village or rather in the *zamindari* in which he had his own habitation, could sell, transfer or bequeath his land, and was not ejected as long as he paid the land revenue. The right to resume his lands after a long absence, provided he cleared his dues, is referred to in Aurangzeb's *farman*

[11]Briggs, Letter to Elphinstone dated 22 December 1815, quoted in *Selections from the Minutes and Official Writings of the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone*, ed., G.W. Forrest (London, 1884), p. 286. This, however, was not accepted by all sections of the British who were swayed by the idea that the *zamindars* were the sole owners of land. Sir John Shore described them in 1789 as cultivators who 'by long occupancy acquire a right of possession in the soil and are not subject to be removed but this right does not authorise them to sell or mortgage it, and it is so far distinct from a right of property' (quoted by W.W. Hunter, *Bengal Records*, London, 1872, Vol. I, pp. 50-1). H.H. Wilson defines *khud-kasht* as 'a resident cultivator, one cultivating his own hereditary lands, either under a *zamindar* or as a coparcener in a village. In Bengal, one class of them, holding their lands at fixed rates by hereditary right, sometimes sublet them, except the part about their dwelling, in which they continue to reside, and although ceasing to cultivate, *and engaged in trade or business*, they retain their designation of *khud-kasht*. The term is also applied in north-western provinces to lands which the proprietor, or the payer of the government revenue, cultivates himself.' (emphasis mine.) See *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms of British India* (2nd edn; Delhi, 1968), p. 267.

[12]Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 277.

addressed to Muhammad Hashim. The *malik-i-zamin* referred to in the document apparently signify the *khud-kasht* peasants.[13]

As far as the payment of land revenue is concerned, the *khud-kasht* or *mirasdar* paid land revenue at a concessional rate or revenue which had been fixed by custom. In theory it could not be increased. In practice it would depend upon the bargaining power of the *mirasdars*, the nature of the government, availability of land, etc. Thus we are told that the Marathas had loaded the *mirasdar* with various extra imposts, raising the land revenue in effect by about half.[14]

The *khud-kasht* right of the peasant to have his lands cultivated by others is a moot question. According to some Rajasthani documents, the local officials were especially instructed not to permit this. As the *khud-kasht* paid revenue at a concessional rate, this would have meant loss of revenue to the state. Hired help could, however, be taken on special occasions such as the harvest season.[15] Khwaja Yasin, however, says that if a *khud-kasht* gave his oxen, etc., and got his lands cultivated by a peasant (*riaya*) the latter would get only one-seventh of the produce.[16] In view of the availability of cultivable waste land in the country such peasants may not have been very numerous, or it may have been difficult to keep them on the land. They would have almost certainly belonged to the low castes which were normally not allowed to own or cultivate land.

From the above account it would appear that as long as there was plenty of cultivable waste land available and the state officials were vigilant, conditions were not propitious for a *khud-kasht* to develop into a capitalist farmer, cultivating his land with the help of hired labour. The essential feature of the *khud-kasht* tenure was the cultivation of the land owned by the peasant himself with the help of family labour and ploughs and bullocks owned by him.

[13]Aurangzeb's *farman* to Muhammad Hashim, text in *JASB*, New Series, Vol. II (1906), pp. 238-49; translated into English by J.N. Sarkar, *Mughal Administration* (Calcutta, 1935), p. 199.

[14]Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 278.

[15]*Chithis* to the *amil, pargana* Fagi, *v.s.* 1780/A.D. 1723; the *amil, pargana* Maujabad, d. *Bhadwa* 6, *v.s.* 1815/22 Sept. 1758; from Diwan Murlidhar to the *amil, pargana* Rampura, d. *Sawan Sudi* 2, 1812/9 August 1755; d. *Bhadwa Vadi* 3, 1813/29 Sept. 1756; to the *amil, pargana* Malarana, d. *Bhadwa Sudi* 8, 1817/5 Sept. 1760. See *Diwan Huzuri Daftar*, Jaipur Section, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner.

[16]Khwaja Yasin, *Glossary*, Purnea Ms., f. 72b.

The *khud-kasht* enjoyed other rights which made his tenure a valuable one. Sometimes he was exempt, partially or wholly, from various imposts payable to the *patils*, such as tax on marriages. Nor did he pay any house tax as long as he had only one habitation in the village. He was, however, generally not exempt from the *gaon kharch* or cesses levied to meet various village expenses such as maintenance of the temple, expense on officials, entertainment, etc.,[17] the exact situation varying greatly. As W.W. Hunter observed:

> The *khud-kasht* right was a valued right, not only because it implied an economic advantage, but because it conferred a certain social status. The resident cultivators formed the governing body of the village commune, its *bhadralok* or respectable class. As such they had not only a good social standing and the power of borrowing from the village moneylender, but also a number of communal privileges in regard to their homestead plots, and to the pasture and forest lands, to the water reservoir and fisheries, to the services of the village servants or officials, and to the pick of the field left unoccupied.[18]

In the second place, they held, as a rule, more land than they were assessed for in the village register. Harrington, the Collector of the Jessore district, wrote in 1776 that 'the normal rate was five rupees per *bigha* but the actual rate only two rupees as the *raiyats* possess 15 *bighas* when their *pattas* state only five, and upon the quantity the assessment of three rupees is made.'[19] According to an earlier British observer in western India, *miras* tenure was also valued because of its 'civic honours and outward means of distinction. The priority of place in an assembly, at a festival, or in a procession and the right of sitting in municipal council are inestimable marks of distinction to a people among whom there is so little property....'[20]

[17]R.N. Gooddine, 'Report on the Village Communities of the Deccan' in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, Vol. IV (Bombay, 1852), pp. 8-9; Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 280. Gooddine divides the *mirasdar* tenure into three categories on the basis of its total, partial or non-exemption from imposts (see Annexure I at the end of article).

[18]W.W. Hunter, *Bengal Records*, Vol. I (London, 1894), p. 52.

[19]Harrington's analysis is quoted in 'Zamindary Settlement of Bengal', I, Appendix 5, p. 103 in W.W. Hunter, *Bengal Records*, Vol. I, p. 52.

[20]Gooddine, *Village Communities*, p. 8.

Along with these privileges the *khud-kasht* had at least two obligations. In common with other cultivators, it was considered a duty to the state to cultivate as much land as they could. Refusal to do so without a valid reason could invite punishment.[21] Secondly, they were collectively responsible for the payment of the land revenue. If any *khud-kasht* or *mirasdar* defaulted, his dues would fall on the other *mirasdars*. If he left his village due to non-payment, his field could be leased out to someone else for a period 'usually not exceeding three years till the expiration of which the *mirasdar* cannot claim restitution'.[22] As we have noted, he could return even after 30 years to reclaim his lands, provided he cleared his dues.

This brings us to the second category of cultivators, the 'vagrant riatts' of Warren Hastings or the *pahi-kasht*. The Fifth Report defined the *pahi-kasht* as those who 'cultivate lands belonging to a village where they do not reside; they are *considered tenants-at-will* and having only a temporary accidental interest in the soil they cultivate' (emphasis mine).[23] The definition is significant, for this was the situation the British found and in the creation of which they had a big hand. For the *pahi* was by no means a tenant-at-will before the arrival of the British. According to an early eighteenth century Persian text, the *pahi* had the same rights in the land he cultivated as the *khud-kasht* peasant. In other words, he could bequeath, alienate or mortgage the lands he cultivated.[24] But this itself is an over-simplification. It would seem that the rights of the *pahis* differed from area to area on the basis of concrete conditions.

According to Yasin's *Glossary*, *pahi* means one who is 'the peasant (*raiyat*) in one *mauza* and is subordinate to one *zamindari* and carries on cultivation in the *zamindari* of another *zamindar*'.[25] This is a fundamental distinction which has often been

[21]Aurangzeb's *farman* to Muhammad Hashim. See Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, p. 199. See also Pottinger's letter in Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 389.

[22]Letter of Capt. Grant, Political Agent at Satara, dt. 17 August 1819, in Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 398.

[23]W.K. Firminger, ed., *Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company*, Vol. II, July 1812, p. 57. See also B.H. Baden-Powell, *The Land System of British India* (Oxford, 1892), p. 599.

[24]Quoted by B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights', p. 5.

[25]Br. Mus. Add, 6603, f. 52a. In the Purnea M.s. f. 53a the *pahi* is identified

underplayed or lost sight of. Since *zamindaris* often represented tribal or clan settlements or an area in which land was cultivated by one or more dominant castes, a person who moved out of it became an outsider. But this did not happen if he moved within the *zamindari*, i.e., the region which had a common tribal clan or caste configuration. Thus, even if a peasant resided in one village, but cultivated land in another village belonging to the same *zamindari*, he would not be considered a *pahi*.[26] In Maharashtra such peasants were called *owandkari*.[27]

The *pahis* were divisible into two main categories. One comprised of those who tilled the *khud-kasht* land belonging to *patils* and the *inam* lands held by *zamindars* or by *madad-i-mash* holders. As we know, the *zamindars* were usually allowed a fixed percentage of the land from which they collected the land revenue allocated to them as *inam*.[28]

In some regions, not merely social but caste taboos prevented the *zamindars* from putting their hands to the plough. It would appear that sufficient numbers of landless persons were available in medieval times for taking up the cultivation of the lands of such *zamindars*. Such cultivators could retain their holdings as long as they wished, on condition of regular payment of land revenue. Or they could be given a strip of land for their maintenance and were in return required to cultivate the lands of the *zamindars*. *Pahis* of this type often did not have their own accessories for cultivation: the ploughs, bullocks and seeds were supplied or rented out to them by the superior sections in village

as 'a peasant (*raiyat*) resident of a *mauza* (who) cultivates the land in another *mauza*...he cultivates the land of another, belongs to the category of *raiyat giri* (*tan ba raiyat giri ayad*).' From the above it would appear that by this time the words *raiyat* and *raiyat-giri* had begun to be identified with a tenant cultivator, i.e., one who did not own the land he cultivated.

[26]It would appear that much of the misunderstanding has been caused by the English rendering of the words *pahi* as a non-resident cultivator in contra-distinction to the *khud-kasht* who was termed as resident cultivator.

[27]Gooddine, *Village Communities*, p. 3.

[28]The percentage allowed varied from region to region from five to 25 per cent. See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 139. For western India see Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 283. It is possible that these *inam* lands, which were considered the property of the *zamindar*, began to be called *sir* in due course. Tenants who cultivated *sir* lands were not allowed to acquire hereditary rights. The *silahdars* (soldiers) also sometimes left their lands to *uparis* for cultivation (ibid., p. 400).

society, such as the *muqaddams*, *zamindars*, *mahajans*, etc.[29] They were apparently prepared to move from place to place in search of better terms. There is some reason to believe that these cultivators were generally assessed on the basis of *batai*,[30] i.e., on the produce, whereas the *miras* tenure implied payment on fixed rates, which often but not always implied measurement.

The third and perhaps the most important and numerous category of the *pahis* comprised those who had their own ploughs and bullocks. Such *pahis* were welcome to take up cultivation of cultivable waste land or to repopulate a village which had been wholly or partially deserted due to natural or man-made calamities. *Pargana* records from Rajasthan as well as Marathi records throw a good deal of light on the process by which villages were repopulated or the cultivation extended. It seems that the *patils* or *muqaddams* and *pahis* played a crucial role in this. Thus, in the case of village Mauza Maharajpur which had been deserted, the village *patil* was asked to settle in the village and give an undertaking that he would bring the entire land in the village under the plough. He was granted a *patta* (lease) on concessional terms, land revenue being settled at one-third of the produce for a period of three years. He, in turn, settled the village by bringing in *pahi-kasht* to whom he gave land at the rate of one-third of the produce for the current year. In another village the new *asamis* were asked to pay at the rate of one-third for bringing cultivable waste land (*banjar*) under cultivation, but at the normal rate of two-fifths for *polaj* (the best quality) land.[31]

Pahis of this type were normally attracted from neighbouring villages. They were allowed to make their hutments (*chhaparbandi*)

[29]*Chithi* to the *amil, pargana* Hindaun, d. *Jeth Vadi* 9, 1812/21 June 1755; to the *amil, pargana* Maujabad, d. *Bhadwa Vadi* 9, 1815/25 Sept. 1758. See *Diwan Huzuri Daftar*, Jaipur Section, R.S.A., Bikaner.

[30]Capt. Grant from Satara, 1819, in Elphinstone's *Official Writings*, pp. 401-2. It is, however, estimated that the cultivator got for himself only one-fourth of the produce, excluding wear and tear of the implements, purchase of cattle and finding their subsistence, etc. The division was made after setting aside the dues of the *patils*, *kulkarnis*, *balutedars* and next year's seeds. The rest of the *huq* dues were taken out of the government's share.

[31]*Yad-dashti* documents, *Diwan Huzuri Daftar*, Jaipur Section, R.S.A., Bikaner, quoted in Chapter III. See also K.V. Purandare, ed., *Shiv Charitra Sahitya*, Vol. 3, p. 427 and V.K. Rajwade, ed., *Marathanchya Itihasanchi Sadhanen*, Vol, XVIII, p. 33.

in the village. They generally brought their ploughs for cultivation. In some village documents from eastern Rajasthan, these *pahis* are listed caste-wise, indicating the number of ploughs belonging to people from various castes. In one such document we are told that 163 *pahis* brought 185 ploughs: of these 46 persons belonged to the three upper castes and owned 58 ploughs, 20 belonged to the lower castes and owned 24 ploughs, while the remaining 93 persons belonging to miscellaneous castes owned 103 ploughs.[32] It would appear that on balance the upper castes had more ploughs and more land at their disposal and that the *pahis* of this category did not belong to the lower castes alone.

Pahis who had their own implements for cultivation were important in the growth, expansion and even the normal functioning of the village society. It was one of the important duties of the village headman (*patil* or *muqaddam*) to bring new land under cultivation or to induce *pahis* to cultivate land abandoned by *mirasis*. This he did by offering them attractive terms. These terms could be of two types. The first, based on *qaul* or lease was progressive, the normal rate being paid during the third or fourth year. The second was called *istawah* or *muqta*. It was meant for the clearance of waste lands and paid only a nominal rent. *Istawah* tenure was open to both *mirasdars* and *uparis*. It was a contract for a long period at the end of which the holder paid the full rate. By this means an *upari* or a *pahi* could acquire *khud-kasht* rights.[33] In some areas an *upari* could acquire *miras* rights by paying a *nazrana*, i.e., a stipulated sum of money. Elsewhere, he may be allowed to convert his lands into *miras* if he had *upari* land and was not disturbed in his holding by the *mirasdars* for 60 or perhaps a hundred years. In any case they were not disturbed in their holdings as long as they paid the land revenue and could bequeath, though not sell or transfer them.[34]

The *khud-kasht* and the *pahis* formed the large majority in the village. A third class of cultivators were those who had no interest

[32] *Yad-dashti Pardakhti Gaon Pargana Malarana*, d. *v.s.* 1783/A.D. 1726, *Diwan Huzuri Daftar*, Jaipur Section, R.S.A., Bikaner, quoted in Chapter III.

[33] Capt. Pottinger, Provisional Collector of Ahmednagar, letter dt. 15 January 1819, Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, pp. 388-90. See also *SCS*, 8:84; Ravindra Kumar, *Western India in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1968), p. 26.

[34] Capt. Grant's letter dt. 17 August 1817 in Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, p. 406.

in land or crops. They were labourers who were paid daily wages. Their numbers were small.[35]

It is very difficult for us in the present state of our knowledge to form even a rough estimate of the proportion of *khud-kasht* and *pahis* in different parts of the country or the size and extent of their holdings. According to Rajasthani records, the *pahis* were sent from many villages and were generally less numerous than the *khud-kasht*. From a *yad-dashti* of *pargana* Pidayan for the year *v.s.* 1783/A.D. 1726 (see Appendix I for details) it appears that there were no *pahis* in five out of the 20 villages in the *pargana*, while 10 villages had only one to four *pahis* each. Of the remaining five villages four had seven to 10 *pahis* each; only one which was the largest village in the *pargana* and is called *qasba* had over 20 *pahis* (actually 22 out of 114 cultivators). Thus there were 75 *pahis* in all out of a total of 391 cultivators, i.e., 19 per cent of the total.[36] In the former territories of the Peshwa in Maharashtra there were some regions such as Karnatak where there were no *mirasdars*. In Khandesh *uparis* were to be found only in areas which had once belonged to the Ahmadnagar kingdom; in Satara there were no *uparis*.[37]

A later study made by Gooddine for the Kumbhari division of the Patoda *taluqa* in Poona district (see Appendix II) shows that out of 34 villages, 16 did not have any *gutkuli* (*upari* or *pahi*), five villages had one or two of them, nine had more than two but less than 20 *pahis* each. There was no village without a *mirasdar*. The *gutkulis*, however, come to 24 per cent of the total. As far as the holding of land was concerned, 968 *mirasdar*s held 128,300 *bighas* of land or on an average 132 *bighas* per person, whereas 226 *gutkulis* (*uparis* or *pahis*) held 23,875 *bighas* which gives an average of 105.6 *bighas* per person.[38] In *pargana* Pidayan in eastern

[35]Ibid., p. 387.

[36]*Yad-dashti Hal-bail Pargana Pidayan, v.s.* 1783/A.D. 1726, *Diwan Huzuri Daftar*, R.S.A., Bikaner (Appendix I). It may be noted that 75 *pahis* had 79½ ploughs and 159 oxen among them, that is, slightly more than one plough and two oxen each. The position of the *gavetis* was slightly better, 318 of them having 347½ ploughs and 694 oxen.

[37]Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, pp. 385-410.

[38]It would appear that the average holding of a *mirasdar* was slightly larger than a *chahur* or land sufficient for four bullocks (i.e., four ploughs) to cultivate. In area a *chahur* was 120 *bighas* (Gooddine, *Village Communities*, p. 6). A standard *bigha* was 0.59 acre in the seventeenth century.

Rajasthan the average holding came to 49 *bighas* per cultivator.[39]

It will be seen from the above that the agricultural situation varied considerably from region to region. Around the Poona area in Maharashtra, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the average holding of a *mirasdar* was higher than that of a *gutkuli*. On an average a *mirasdar* had more land than a *chahur*, i.e., land which he could cultivate with four ploughs. A portion of it was thus available for renting out or being cultivated with the help of hired labour.[40] But it would not be possible to generalise this experience. Earlier, Captain Syckes, in his study of village Ambola, found that the holdings of *uparis* were comparable in area and productivity to the majority of the *thalwahiks* (*mirasdar* or *khud-kasht*).[41] In eastern Rajasthan the average holding of 49 *bighas* (including fallow) was as much as could be cultivated with one plough and two bullocks. But as we have seen, in many villages the average holding seems to have been much less, almost half of the average.

It would seem that relations between the *khud-kasht* and the *pahis*, particularly their economic position, depended upon a number of factors including the proportion in numbers between the two, the total land available for cultivation in a village, and the strength and position of the *zamindar*. As Warren Hastings states:

> The vagrant *Riatts* have it in their power in some measure to make their own terms with the *zamindars*. They make land at

[39]See Appendix I. We have excluded two villages where figures for the cultivated area are not available. The unit of cultivation for a plough with two bullocks varied from area to area depending upon the nature of the soil and the quality of the bullocks. The average holding is not directly related to the area under cultivation. The *yad-dashti* also gives figures for area under cultivation in each village in the winter and summer seasons and the area in fallow. This, however, does not give an adequate idea of the actual inequality among these cultivators. Thus, a few of them had up to four oxen, a few others had two to three oxen; the percentage of these 'richer' peasants comes to about 10. See *Diwan Huzuri Daftar*, Jaipur Section, R.S.A., Bikaner.

[40]Labourers were generally paid by being assigned a strip of land in return for their labour. They were thus not wage labourers.

[41]'Tabular view of the Distribution of Village Lands in the Village of Ambola, Poona Collectorate', Appendix to Major Syckes's report on Poona District, n.d., R.D. Vol. 154B of 1826, quoted by Ravindra Kumar, *Western India*, p. 20.

> an under rent, hold it for one season, the *zamindars* then increase the rent or exact more than their agreement, and the *Riatts* either desert, or if they continue they hold their land at a rent lower than the established rate of the country. Thus, the ancient and industrious tenants are obliged to submit to undue exactions, while the vagrant *Riatts* enjoy lands at half price, which operates as an encouragement to desertion, and to the depopulation of the country.[42]

On the basis of the experience in Orissa, where the medieval system continued till late, another perceptive British administrator observed:

> In thickly populated provinces, or wherever there were more cultivators than there was land for them to till, the customary rates paid by the *khud-kasht* cultivators were lower than the rates at which an outsider could obtain a holding. In thinly populated districts, or wherever there was more land than there were cultivators to till it, an outsider cultivator could obtain a holding at lower rate than the customary rates paid by the *khud-kasht* cultivators.
>
> So long as the land on an estate continued to be twice as much as the hereditary peasantry could till, the resident husbandmen were of too much importance to be bullied or squeezed into discontent. But once a large body of immigrant cultivators had grown up, this primitive check upon the landlord's exactions was removed. The migratory tenants, therefore, not only lost the position in their old villages, but they were harassed in their new settlements. Worse than all, they were to a certain extent confounded with the landless low castes, who, destitute of their local connections so keenly prized in a rural society on the evidence of respectability, wandered about as hired labourers and temporary culivators of surplus village lands...[43]

It follows from the above that as long as there was plenty of land available the *pahi* cultivator could bargain and become the proprietor (*malik*) of the land he cultivated. Once pressure on land increased, the position of the *pahi* worsened, and he quickly sank to the position of a tenant-at-will. During the medieval period when land was relatively surplus, the distinction between the *khud-kasht* and the *pahi* did not become rigid; one could

[42] *Hastings Papers*, Br. Mus., European Add. Ms. 19090.

[43] W.W. Hunter, *Bengal Records*, Vol. I, p. 52; *Orissa* (London, 1872), pp. 58-9.

easily be transformed into the other. Absence of a rigid demarcation among different classes of peasants as among the *zamindars* brought a great flexibility to the feudal system in India without, however, modifying it in essence. Among other things it also provided an escape, though in a limited measure, from the oppressions of the caste system: men of the lower caste could and sometimes did take advantage of the contradictions in the situation to found new villages or bring cultivable waste land under cultivation and acquire proprietary rights in land. Alternatively, they could migrate to the towns where they could hope to escape to some extent from the limitations of the caste system.

The development of Indian society during the eighteenth century has to be judged in this context. It has now been accepted even by Western scholars that emphasis on village self-sufficiency misled many scholars in the past into postulating that medieval Indian society was based on some kind of natural economy.[44] The rapid growth of towns, the development of a national market in certain types of commodities, the growing involvement of India in the international market and the consequent growth of commodity production, particularly in the coastal areas, and the increasing penetration of money economy into village life are some of the features of seventeenth century India.

Some historians have spoken of the village community as 'gradually disintegrating' in the eighteenth century due to deepening property inequality, spread of commodity-money relations, erosion of the position of the 'hereditary landholders', the growth of a 'feudalising' elite among the rich members of the community, etc.[45] It is quite true that the Indian village could not remain unaffected by the growth of money economy and accumulation of money capital in the country. The state, the *zamindars*, the *mahajans* and the village headman including men of substance who had numerous ploughs (such people were called *hal-mirs*) provided capital as well as organisation for the expansion of cultivation. A part of it was used for shifting from low grade crops to high grade crops. This included not only a great increase in the production

[44]See Chapter XII; Irfan Habib, 'Potentiality of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India', *Enquiry*, Winter 1971, pp. 1-56; Morris D. Morris, 'Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History', *JEH*, Vol XXIII, No. 4, 1963, pp. 606-18.

[45]Cf. A.I.Chicherov, *India: Economic Development in the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries*, pp. 17-18.

of cash crops, but also a change in the proportion of winter (*rabi*) crops such as wheat and summer (*kharif*) crops.[46] Accumulation of capital by *mahajans* who acted as money changers, money-lenders, grain dealers and as guarantors of various transactions is another significant development during the eighteenth century.[47]

The precise role of these various sections and their impact on the agrarian economy of the country has yet to be assessed. There is little evidence to prove that the number of *khud-kasht* peasants markedly decreased in India during the eighteenth century, which would have implied the weakening, if not the disintegration of the village community. In the absence of such precise information the British administrators put forward various hypotheses regarding the existence of *mirasis* and *uparis*—that the *uparis* were introduced as the old proprietors sank under the tyranny of the Muslims, that the Muslims introduced *miras* tenures in order to bind down the peasants, and that it was due to the natural growth of population.[48]

It would, therefore, be hazardous to make broad generalisations regarding Indian village society in the present state of our knowledge. As we have seen, the *khud-kasht* and the *pahis* were not mutually exclusive. Also, India was a vast country with varying conditions. We cannot, therefore, preclude a situation in which feudal relations might become stronger in one region, while in another region forces for its transformation might be gathering strength. A careful search for and study of regional documents is, therefore, a prime requisite for a more realistic understanding of the stage of the development of Indian society during the eighteenth century.

[46]S.N. Hasan, K.N. Hasan and S.P. Gupta, 'The Pattern of Agricultural Production in the Territories of Amber, c. 1650-1750', *Procs. IHC* (1966), pp. 149-63.

[47]See Dilbagh Singh, 'Ijara System in Eastern Rajasthan A.D. 1750-1800', *Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress*, Vol. VI (1973), pp. 60-9.

[48]Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, pp. 279, 392, 401-2.

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APPENDIX I

YAD-DASHTI HAL BAIL PARGANA PIDAYAN *v.s.* 1783/A.D. 1726

Name of the mauza	*No. of gaveti cultivators*	*No. of pahi cultivators*	*Total no. of cultivators*	*No. of ploughs*		*Total No. of ploughs*	*No. of bullocks*		*Total no. of bullocks*	*Total cultivable area in bighas (Qabil-ziraat)*	*Area under cultivation in bighas*
				Gaveti	*Pahi*		*Gaveti*	*Pahi*			
Qasba Pirayan	92	22	114	113	22	135	226	44	270	5756	3276
Rasul Pur	16	1	17	17	1	18	34	2	36	910	509
Melghara	30	10	40	31	10	41	62	20	82	1400	1021
Jodhpur	5	1	6	4	2	6	8	4	12	270	107
Ichhori	20	6	26	20	6	26	40	12	52	1100	612
Shero	17	10	27	18	11	29	36	22	58	1100	849
Mukand Pur	5	1	6	5	1	6	10	2	12	610	275
Sahiba Bad	4	—	4	4	—	4	8	—	8	270	201
Talo	16	7	23	23	9	32	46	18	64	820	770
Kuwaho	14	—	14	14	—	14	28	—	28	—	—
Bhari Pahari	4	2	6	4	2	6	8	4	12	410	223
Tove Kalan	16	2	18	16½	2	18½	32	4	36	1000	475½
Kherlo	2	2	4	2	2	4	4	4	8	800	316
Salam Pur	15	1	16	15	1	16	30	2	32	500	414
Dharo	27	4	31	28	4½	32½	56	8	64	1100	863
Gurio	8	4	12	8	4	12	16	8	24	700	255
Ram Singh Pur	6	2	8	6	2	8	12	4	16	575	300
Gharathvari	4	—	4	4	—	4	8	—	8	250	200
Jai Singh Pur	8	—	8	8	—	8	16	—	16	—	—
Tove Khurd	7	—	7	7	—	7	14	—	14	650	500
Total	316	75	391	347½	79½	427	694	158	852	18,221	11,166½

Note: Prepared by Dilbagh Singh, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

V

Nature of Medieval Indian Society and the Jagirdari Crisis

DURING the last two decades, new vistas have been opened up in the study of the development of society in its various manifestations. The study of economic and cultural life has made steady progress. Large numbers of monographs have added to our knowledge of political history. New approaches have led to a renewed search for new sources, or of a critical utilisation of old sources. In this way new insights have been gained into the structure, organisation and development of society. Archaeology has been an important instrument in this direction. Archaeological excavations have pushed back into time the boundaries of the rise and growth of cultures in different regions of India, and of the patterns of living.

There has been immense interest in the study of Indian social history. Despite the great progress made, we have yet to clearly delineate the fundamental characteristics of various phases of the development of society in our country. The works of a number of distinguished historians have established more or less convincingly that during the historic period, state and society assumed a definite form with the rise of Buddhism which coincided with the establishment of large territorial empires in North India, and the large scale use of iron. There is, as yet, little agreement as to the processes by which the Aryan and non-Aryan tribes interacted to produce an agrarian community, or to the phases and special features of this new social order in different regions of the country and the character of the ruling class.

Presidential Address at the Indian History Congress, XXXVIII Session, Bhubaneswar, 1977, and published in the *Procs. IHC*, 1978, pp. 4-20.

Even during the ancient period, a surplus was generated by agriculture over the minimum needs of the tiller of the soil. However, the latter was not able to retain the full fruits of his labour, a considerable part of it being appropriated by the state in various ways, even if some of the surplus extracted went back to the working people in one way or another. This is a phenomenon which was by no means confined to India, and would have to be discussed in the context of the recent discussions on the Slave System and the Asiatic Mode of Production. Neither of the two concepts appears to be wholly applicable to India. However, in order to arrive at any definite conclusions, it would be necessary to encourage and inculcate the methodology of comparative study as also to pay greater attention to the examination of concepts. There is hardly any study of Greek or Roman history in our universities. The study of the languages and civilisation of the ancient Near East is also completely neglected. In view of our continuous commercial and cultural relations with these countries from Harappan times this is a serious lacuna which needs to be filled in speedily. It appears to me that our almost exclusive preoccupation with Indian history and neglect of the study of the history of neighbouring countries is, in part, a hangover of the colonial past, in part a reflection of our deep-seated belief in the 'uniqueness' of Indian development.

The writings of D.D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma, to name only two distinguished scholars working in the field, have demonstrated that in course of time, the ancient mode of production gave rise to a new social order which may be designated the feudal order. There has been a lively debate among scholars whether feudalism was specifically a European phenomenon, or whether some of its more general features, e.g., the domination of state and society by a class which lived on the surplus produced by agriculture but which did not work the land itself, extraction of agricultural surplus by extra-economic means, a strong sense of hierarchy based on domination and control of land, domination of domestic production, etc., could be extended to cover societies outside Europe. Whether the term feudalism is used to denote it or not, there has been a broad consensus that the period from the eighth century onward represents a new phase of society. A number of valuable studies dealing with the economic and social history of India between the eighth and twelfth centuries have

concretised various aspects of the social structure in the country. However, a number of aspects have yet to be examined in detail, such as: the forces which led to the gradual emergence of what has been termed feudalism in the context of India; the relationship of the new social order with the village communities; the persistence of clan and caste forms; and the nature and pattern of India's external and internal trade during the period in the context of the rise of Islam on the one hand, and the spread and expansion of India's commercial and cultural contacts with South-East Asia, on the other.

It has been postulated that the rise of Islam largely severed India's commercial relations with West Asia, so that gold ceased to come to North India and hence gold coins were not minted there till the eleventh century. This leaves a number of unresolved problems. Pirenne's thesis tracing the decline of trade in medieval Europe to the rise of Islam is no longer accepted by European scholars, and is even less applicable to India. Even if we accept that North India was no longer importing gold from West Asia, why did gold, which was coming to South India from South-East Asia, not come to North India in the course of normal trade? Was this due to the decline of long distance intra-regional trade in India during the period? What were the factors which made North India opt for silver currency as the main medium of exchange while gold coins remained more popular in South India till the third quarter of the seventeenth century? Perhaps a closer interaction between numismatists, historians and historical geographers, and the collaboration of scholars of the ancient and medieval periods (as per the present division which still persists) may help in throwing some light on these problems. In order to study this problem in the wider Asian context, a careful study of Arabic sources is a prime necessity. Although the works of a few Arab geographers have been translated, little effort has been made to screen the vast mass of Arabic language and literary sources for the nature and direction of medieval trade and India's role in it. Similarly, a careful study of South-East Asian sources is called for.

Although the general features of feudalism in India during the Turkish and Mughal periods are fairly well-known, there has been considerable discussion about some of its specific features, and the broad lines of its development. Some of the points at issue

have been: (i) the nature and role of the two wings of the ruling class—the *thakurs/zamindars* or the local ruling class, and those holding central power, called *iqtadars* or *jagirdars*, in development especially agricultural development; (ii) classification of different elements which could be grouped under the head 'peasant' or 'cultivator' and their relations with the state; (iii) the role of caste in the village community, and its development and impact on the formation of social groups and popular movements during the period; (iv) the composition, strength and role of the commercial classes, and their relationship with the state. The question whether the feudal order had more or less reached the limit of its development towards the end of the seventeenth century or whether it was capable of development to a higher stage of society, i.e., capitalism, on its own if foreign rule had not intervened, has been raised by a number of scholars, both Indian and foreign. While the question may appear to be speculative, it has helped in focusing attention on the study of developmental trends in medieval society. However, a good deal of intensive work, adopting the methodology of quantitative study of limited branches and regions may be necessary before we can essay any definitive answer. The role and functioning of the Mughal state and the Mughal ruling classes will have to be assessed in this context, and in the context of the interplay of various groups and classes, rather than ascribing the rise and fall of the empire to the actions and policies of individuals, or the tussle for power between religious and ethnic groups. In other words, it is not the managerial aspects to which primary attention needs to be given but to the study of the economic and social structure and the resulting tensions.

In the study of the period of colonial rule in India, there has been a welcome trend of moving away from the study of British policies to assessing the impact of these policies on the life and condition of the Indian peoples. The 'drain theory', the impact of the policies of the East India Company on the trade and agriculture of the areas under its control, the problems of re-feudalisation and de-urbanisation during the period, and the impact of the decline of village industries on the economy and the social system are some of the aspects which need to be taken up for detailed study. Like the earlier periods of our history, these studies too will have to be set in the wider framework of the

nature and working of European colonialism in Asian and African countries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To over-emphasise the 'objectively progressive' role of the imperialist countries in their colonies, even while the scholars of these countries are trying to independently assess the nature and impact of foreign rule on their countries, would only mean a distortion of the historical process. Similarly, the rise of nationalist movements in these countries has to be seen against the wider economic, social and cultural developments, rather than as a reflection of individual frustrations or the ambitions of elite groups.

* * * *

It is unfortunate that after the pioneering work of K.M. Ashraf, little attention has been paid to the study of social and economic developments during the Sultanat period. Even now, the Sultanat period tends to be regarded as being largely sterile from a developmental point of view. However, if we look beneath the outward shell of violence, acts of vandalism, and frequent change of dynasties, a different picture emerges, especially if seen in the context of the earlier period.

Growing regionalism and localism were important aspects of the state in northern India between the eighth and twelfth centuries. The integration of northern India under Turkish rule, the strongly urban ethos of the new ruling class, the need to set up garrison-towns in different parts of the empire, etc., led to a definite process of urbanisation which becomes clearly marked during the fifteenth century. The need for a token currency and the growth of a number of new towns in the Gangetic plains was an index to this process. Barani repeatedly testifies to the wealth and power of the commercial classes, both Hindus and Muslims. He mentions how gold was found only in the houses of the Hindu and Multani merchants who catered to the extravagant tastes of the Turkish ruling class by lending them money on interest, and by 'regrating' (*ihtekar*, profiteering) on commodities. Alauddin's market control policy was designed to squeeze this class, while Muhammad Tughlaq went to the other extreme: he tried to forge an alliance with the Hindu and Muslim merchants and artisans

who had become rich and influential.[1] The policy did not succeed, due to a strong feeling of resentment and opposition by the Muslim feudal aristocracy, and the lack of support by the local Hindu gentry—the *rais*, the *thakurs* and the village *chaudhris*—with whom the Hindu traders and artisans had hardly any integral relationship. Firuz Tughlaq reversed the policy, and also tried to provide stability to the state and to the ruling class by making the nobility largely hereditary in character. In the long run, this militated against the centralising and integrationist trend established by the Turks, and became a factor in the disintegration of the Sultanat. The interplay between centralising tendencies which implied, in a certain measure, the bureaucratisation of the nobility, and the search for stability which often implied that the nobility should become largely hereditary, in fact if not in form, was a problem which persisted during the Mughal period. So also the problem of how to curb the power and authority of the local landed gentry in the interests of a centralised state, and how to draw them into the task of administration for the sake of stability.

The further development of society during the period of the Mughal rule, and the class nature of the alliances forged by the Mughal rulers to stabilise their position in the country has to be seen in this context. It may be pertinent to point out that while classifying society on the traditional Indian model of the four states or *varnas*, Abul Fazl assigned the first place to the warriors, the second to artificers and merchants, the third to the learned and the fourth to husbandmen and labourers,[2] thus reflecting the position the various classes/castes had come to occupy. In his efforts to stabilise the empire, Akbar paid special attention to the first and the third of these, at the same time not neglecting the peasants. Akbar liberalised the policy of giving *madad-i-maash* grants to Hindus, i.e., Brahmins, some of them also being employed in the translation department, or as royal astrologers. It is interesting that *madad-i-maash* grants continued to be made to

[1]Zia ud din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, ed., S.A. Khan and Nassau Lees (Calcutta, 1862), p. 505. Barani says barbers, cooks, gardeners, weavers, other mean and ignoble persons were given high posts and *iqtas*. It is not clear whether Kishan, whom he mentions more than once, was a 'shop keeper' (*bazari*) or belonged to a low caste.

[2]*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, p. 4.

Hindu *sanyasis* even under Aurangzeb. The Mughals were conscious of the importance of trade and commerce. On balance, trade and traders were cherished and protected, but the 'political connections' between rulers and merchants remained tenuous. Little attempt was made to remove the difficulties which often hampered trade and commerce. Nor were the merchants more closely involved in the formulation of economic policies or in the running of the administration even locally. While a noble like Mir Jumla could take to trade, instances of a successful merchant being ennobled were few and far between.

The most important group in society were undoubtedly the local landed elements. After returning to India from his exile, Humayun embarked upon a definite policy of alliance with the powerful *zamindars*, both Hindu and Muslim. This policy, which included matrimonial alliances, led to the close association of what may be called the regional ruling class, i.e., the *zamindars*. Many rajas were assigned a *mansab* to fix their place in the social hierarchy, while a section of them who had a substantial military following was drawn into the task of actively aiding in the expansion and defence of the empire. These were mostly the Rajputs. The alliance had many positive aspects: it helped the process of Indianisation of the Mughals and contributed to better relations between the two major communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. In return for their services, the Rajputs were helped to consolidate their states against rival claimants, or from hostile neighbours, and, in addition to their *watans*, they were granted *jagirs* outside their states to augment their resources, thus strengthening their domestic position. Later, a similar policy was sought to be applied to the Marathas in the context of the Deccan. But it met with limited success. It has been shown that during the latter part of Aurangzeb's rule, the Marathas far outstripped at various levels the *mansabs* that the Rajputs had ever enjoyed. However, the Marathas never became the stable allies or the sword arm of the empire like the Rajputs. It is difficult to expatiate on the causes. The Maratha *deshmukhi* families were accustomed to the rule of the Bahamani kings, and later of the Nizam Shahi, Adil Shahi and Qutb Shahi rulers. Exchanging their rule with the Mughals would hardly have implied a major change for them. The reasons why this did not happen may, perhaps, be found in the structure of Maratha society as also in developments in the Mughal empire.

Unlike the Rajput rajas in the north, the Maratha *deshmukhi* families did not have an assured position: they had not been rulers for generations, nor did they have a definite clan following. The Mughals were, therefore, not prepared to look upon them as their social equals. This was reinforced by the fact that the local Brahmins refused to countenance the claim of many of these *deshmukhi* families to a high Kshatriya status. Many of the Brahmins, like Murari Pandit, Madanna and Akhanna, had their own political ambitions, but had no local base of their own. Thus, both the Maratha *sardars* and the Brahmins were dependent on mercenary soldiers or freebooters (*bargirs*).

Even the limited policy of alliance with the local landed classes could not succeed. The failure was not essentially personal, though personal factors such as the narrow outlook and understanding of Aurangzeb, and the legitimate ambition of Shivaji of setting up an independent principality did play a part. A closer look at medieval society is needed to understand some of the causes of these developments. For purposes of analysis, Nurul Hasan had classified the *zamindars* into three categories: the autonomous chiefs, the intermediary *zamindars* and the primary *zamindars*. According to him, these categories were hierarchical but not mutually exclusive. Also, there was a latent struggle for land, power and authority among them. Thus, the attempt of the bigger rajas to bring intermediary *zamindars* under their control was a continuous feature. Struggles between the Rathors and Bhatis in the Pokharan area, between the Chauhans and the Hadas in the Ranthambhor area, and between the Kachhawas and the Jats in the Mathura-Bharatpur area were, to some extent, a reflection of this conflict. The Mughals tried to utilise conflicts between the various sections of *zamindars* for their own purposes. In this conflict many factors, including religion, caste and clan played a role. Thus, Jat solidarity enabled them to defeat the Kachhawas, even though the latter were backed by the Mughals. Similarly, the religious brotherhood (*khalsa*) enabled Guru Govind Singh to triumph against the hill rajas of the Punjab who were, again, backed by the Mughal state. In the case of the Marathas, Shivaji, who derived a great deal of support from the smaller *deshmukhs*, successfully rallied a section of the cultivators against the big *deshmukhs* who were allied with Bijapur, and thus forged a weapon which could withstand Mughal might.

For a better understanding of the problems facing the ruling classes in the medieval period, the nature of the opposition movements and the problems of development, a detailed study of the functioning of the caste system and the village community is necessary. Recent studies show that the peasantry in medieval India was not an undifferentiated mass. It was divided on the basis of occupation, caste and economic position. The largest category consisted of those who either owned land, or who derived their major income from cultivation. Among these may be included *zamindars*, the village officials and the *khud-kasht*, the *pahi-kasht*, and landless labourers who were sometimes indistinguishable from the low caste artisans or the *kamin*.[3]

This system was under-pinned by caste. The castes, which held *khud-kasht* rights, formed the dominant castes in the village. However, members of the three upper castes were generally included in this category and, if evidence from eastern Rajasthan is any guide, they had a separate *dastur*, and were assessed at a lower, concessional rate—about 15 per cent less. The *khud-kasht* and the upper caste elements thus had an advantageous position which they tried to exploit in a variety of ways. They let out their surplus lands on a share-cropping (*nalbant* or *sanjha*) basis to the *pahis*, and to other low-caste persons settled in the village while pretending it was under their personal cultivation and hence assessable at concessional rates; or they tried to extend their *khud-kasht* cultivation at the expense of the *pahis*, sometimes by force, sometimes by mortgaging the lands of needy farmers by lending them money, seeds, bullocks, etc., and then seizing their lands. The role of the *khud-kasht* in the functioning of village society, their relationship with the weaker elements in the village on the one hand, and with the state as well as with the *zamindar* on the other, is important in understanding the functioning of the revenue administration and the nature of the crisis faced by the Mughal ruling class at a certain stage. The Mughal revenue administration depended for its success on maintaining a balance between contending sections in the rural society. On the one hand, they tried to stand forth as protectors of the poor peasants against the encroachments of the *khud-kasht*, i.e., the dominant castes, and of the *khud-kasht* against the *zamindars*. On the other, the Mughal state depended largely on the *zamindars* for collection

[3]See Chapter IV for a detailed review of the *khud-kasht* and *pahi-kasht*.

of land revenue, and in some instances, on the village headmen. If the state could no longer act as mediator in the tussle between different sections in the rural society, the delicate balance which kept the various sections in their proper places would collapse, and the way opened for a particular section to try to establish its dominance so as to appropriate a larger part of the agricultural surplus. A crisis could also be created if the central government tried to increase its share of the land revenue, thereby running the risk of uniting in opposition the various sections in rural society. For this reason, this expedient was generally avoided, and there is evidence to suggest that the share of the government (excluding the share of the superior landed classes) in the rural produce did not increase, in the over-all situation.

The social conflicts which the Mughals were unable to resolve, within the broad framework of the class alliance forged by them, were reflected in a financial crisis and in the crisis of the *jagirdari* system, the two being interrelated. The phrase 'crisis of the *jagirdari* system' is now popular usage. As one amongst those who first put it forward as a major factor in the downfall of the Mughal empire, perhaps I should explain that I did not understand by it an administrative crisis, linked to the lack of sufficient *jagirs* required for a growing number of *mansabdars*. Thus, *bejagiri*, as also frequent transfers which made the *jagirdars* grasping, were only incidental to the crisis. The crisis, as I have said, was rooted in the structure of medieval society and its working.

By interpreting the crisis of the *jagirdari* system in a narrow administrative sense, an attempt has been made recently to show that the crisis was only of a managerial nature. Thus, it has been argued that the augmentation of the revenue resources of the empire following the annexation of the Deccani states roughly kept pace with the expansion of the nobility during the second half of Aurangzeb's region, and that the lack of *pai baqi* land was due to a deliberate decision on Aurangzeb's part to keep the most lucrative *jagirs* under *khalisa* in order to provide for the continued campaigning in the Karnatak and against the Marathas. It might be recalled that a similar policy had been followed by Murshid Quli Khan in Bengal, making the bulk of the lands in Bengal *khalisa* and pushing out the *jagirdars* to less fertile lands in Orissa. In fact, it was a part of Aurangzeb's policy, pursued since the beginning of his reign, to considerably augment the lands

under *khalisa*. Several factors could have been responsible for this policy. In a general way, it strengthened the position of the monarchy *vis-a-vis* the nobility. Assignment of the nobles to the less developed or disturbed (*zor-talab*) areas was to give them a personal incentive and reason for expanding and improving cultivation and bringing the *zamindars* of the area under tighter imperial control. Thus, pursuit of a more warlike policy could hardly be considered the only purpose of the policy. Frequent transfers of *jagirdars* were common even under Jahangir, as Hawkins complained. We have no detailed information whether transfers were more frequent under Shah Jahan than earlier. Under Aurangzeb, they were apparently confined to certain parts of the empire, the Deccan especially, which cannot be generalised for the empire as a whole without further detailed study. Even in the Deccan, there are many cases where individual nobles held on to their *jagirs* for long periods. As long as the local revenue and administrative machinery functioned, illegal exactions from the peasantry could be limited. Moreover, in most cases the *jagirdar* had to deal with the local *zamindars*, who were generally powerful enough not to submit to arbitrary or illegal exactions, or without bringing in the central government. Thus, the transfer of a *jagirdar* did not have as much effect on the peasant as has been postulated.

The crisis of the *jagirdari* system had made its appearance fairly early in the history of the empire. Akbar had to face it, but the rapid expansion of the empire, and the setting up of an administrative machinery which benefited the peasants and also satisfied the *zamindars*, resolved the problem for the time being. The problem surfaced again under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Towards the end of Shah Jahan's reign, a *mansabdar* was lucky if the realisation from his *jagir* was more than five monthly (five out of 12 months, i.e., less than half). The number of horses, and ultimately the number of *sawars* he maintained for the service of the state (which included the contingent needed for realisation of the land revenue) had to be reduced proportionately. Thus, his ability to collect the land revenue on his own, i.e., without the intervention of the local *faujdar*, tended to be diminished. In the Deccan, the realisation was even less—about three monthly, and the power and influence of the *jagirdar* proportionately lower. Pressure on the system increased if the local *faujdars* were unwilling or unable to support the *jagirdars*. This happened in parts

of the Deccan during Aurangzeb's reign, and in many other areas later on.

It is not my purpose here to try to analyse in detail all the facets in the accentuation of the crisis of the *jagirdari* system from the middle of the seventeenth century, or the rise of various opposition movements. For this a detailed study on a regional basis will have to be made covering the social structure, the nature of the productive relations, the functioning of the caste system and of the village community. Such an analysis will have to be carried out without pre-conceived notions regarding the nature of the Mughal states, or relations between religious and ethnic groups, the conflict between these groups often being at heart, a social conflict.

Perhaps the only manner in which the crisis of the *jagirdari* system could have been deferred for a longer period was a rapid development of the economy, both in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. The question, however, then arises, could feudal consolidation have aided or permitted such a development? Or could a capitalist order have developed within the framework of the empire, and gradually modified it? Although some detailed studies of the nobility have been made, and the involvement of Mughal emperors, members of the royal family and many nobles including even *qazis* in both internal and external trade have been underlined, a detailed study of the policy and attitudes of the emperors and the nobles towards trade and the traders has yet to be made. A careful examination of the Portuguese records which have now become available, the Dutch, English and French records, as also the records of some neighbouring countries, will throw light on the extent of the involvement of the nobles and Indian traders in the commercial ventures of the foreign companies. But it would not, perhaps, be far wrong to say that trade was a supplementary source of income for rulers and nobles, something not to be ignored but hardly a stable source of income, or of power. Although Abul Fazl did advise nobles to 'indulge a little in commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings', and have 'somewhat invested in the speculations of others',[4] the question is: was money saved by the nobles used for investment in trade on a regular basis, or was trade made to yield money for the ostentatious living of the

[4] *Ain-i-Akbari* Vol. II, pp. 57-8.

nobles? In this connection, Bernier's remarks about the shameful treatment meted out to the artisans by the nobles is germane, but it is really an index of the attitude of the feudal classes as also of the merchants towards the working population.

What did the merchants expect from a state such as the Mughal state? What did they expect to gain or fear from it? Bernier's remark that the merchants 'strove to appear indigent' lest they be used as 'fill'd sponges' appears to be a gross exaggeration. In fact, starting from Sher Shah's solicitude to Jahangir's Ordinance protecting the property of merchants who died on the road, there are many examples of the state's eagerness to protect the property of merchants. The law of escheat did not apply to the merchants. Forced loans, sometimes taken in times of acute stringency such as civil wars, were paid with interest if the prince was successful. The merchants were familiar with state monopolies in specific commodities (salt, indigo) and efforts at engrossment by individuals, or demands for presents. But these were accepted as part of the working of the system which had to be put up with. The steady growth of a money economy during the seventeenth century implies that the system did not inhibit the expansion of trade and commerce, at least up to a point. Even the master craftsmen, some of whom employed workmen and sold their goods without the help of middlemen, were emerging to a position of respect in the bigger towns. Witness Tavernier's story (probably apocryphal) of Jahangir getting drunk in a pub in the company of a master craftman.

Thus, towns were emerging as centres of trade and manufacture. In some of the regions such as Gujarat, where merchants were more numerous and influential, there are instances of the merchants putting up organised resistance to some official measures, or handling of a local situation. The *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* mentions a number of these. But these were admittedly few and far between, and no conclusions can be drawn from them. As a class, on an all-India basis, the merchants were not rich or powerful enough to claim a share in state power. However, if the break-up of the Mughal empire and consequent weakening of the feudal classes had not been accompanied by the emergence of foreign rule in the second half of the eighteenth century, it is conceivable that the middle classes, which had not been sensibly weakened by the decline of the empire to all appearances, might have been able

to play a larger role in some of the states where trade and commerce had continued to grow apace. Later, in Mysore, Tipu tried to copy the British by setting up a State Bank, and a number of factories. Recent studies suggest that a real set-back to trade and manufactures came only during the second half of the eighteenth century when the traders of the East India Company were able to use political power to discriminate against the Indian traders, and when the British policies led to a drain of wealth from the country, ruination of handicrafts and a process of de-urbanisation, forcing many of the traders to turn to speculation in land.

No study of the possibilities of economic development can be complete without a careful study of trends in the village economy. The State Archives, Bikaner; Peshwa Record Office, Poona; and the Andhra State Records Office, Hyderabad, contain masses of records which have a vital bearing on this aspect. Studies of the history of the growth of villages and village society have hardly begun. Some recent studies of village society in Rajasthan have added a great deal to our knowledge regarding the pattern of land ownership, crop distribution, trends of development, etc. From a study of *yad-dashti hal bail* from some parts of Rajasthan, the following emerges.[5]

	Pargana	*I Poor (per cent)*	*II Middle (per cent)*	*III Rich (per cent)*	*Total*
1	Chatsu (26 villages)	363 (24.4)	987 (66.6)	133 (9)	1,483 (100)
2	Chala Kalan (94 villages)	492 (18.6)	2,139 (80.9)	14 (0.5)	2,645 (100)
3	Kotla	5(0.6)	741(90.2)	76(9.2)	822 (100)

Thus, a section of rich peasants, rising up to nine per cent of the *asamis* in some villages, could be found even in some areas of Rajasthan which were less fertile compared to the Doab, the Punjab, etc. On the basis of *jizyah* figures in a *pargana* in the Punjab, Irfan Habib had argued[6] that the rich peasants constituted about five per cent of the assessed households. Since this was an average for the *pargana*, variations between villages cannot be

[5]See Chapter XIII for details.

[6]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 119-20.

excluded. What was the life pattern of these rich peasants? Did they provide a market, however limited, for city products, or the products of skilled artisans living in rural areas or *qasbas*? In this connection, the role of the small towns, or *qasbas*, which were grain collecting centres, and possibly centres for production is important and needs to be studied in detail. For a number of reasons, the state policies were aimed at preserving the small peasant economy. Thus, the *khud-kasht* were not allowed to cultivate their lands with the help of hired labour, or to extend their cultivation at the expense of land held by *pahis*. Some of the rich peasants used their wealth to lend money on interest, or mortgaged the lands of poor peasants, reducing them to the position of share-croppers. Thus the only lines on which they could grow was to become intermediary *zamindars* or *mahajans*, i.e., grain-dealers cum moneylenders. This may serve to explain many of the trends of development in India, especially its stagnation or slow development.

VI

Review of the Crisis of the Jagirdari System

THE CRISIS of the *jagirdari* system in the Mughal empire was closely linked to economic and social relations in medieval India, specifically to the agrarian relations and the administrative superstructure reared upon these relations. As recent research has shown, rural society in medieval India was dominated by a large heterogenous group of people called *zamindars* by the medieval writers. The *zamindars* were often closely linked with the cultivators organised on the basis of caste, clan or tribe. The caste, clan or tribe, it appears, often settled on land on a fairly compact territorial basis, so that groups of villages—12, 24, 48, etc.—'belonged' to certain castes. The necessity of collecting land revenue from the landholders who were often armed and organised on a caste/tribal basis, military-minded, and not prepared to part easily with any share of the agricultural surplus, created strong disintegrative tendencies. The *iqtadari* or the *jagirdari* systems which were specific features of the administrative system of the Sultanat and the Mughals should be viewed against this background. *Iqtadari* and *jagirdari* implied giving individual nobles a vested interest in collecting land revenue from the landholders in the tracts assigned to them in *iqta* or *jagir*. But for the presence of a class of powerful *zamindars* in the country, the *iqta* or *jagir* system could, perhaps, have been dispensed with, as was attempted by at least one ruler. It is true that control over land was also a matter of social prestige or status in an essentially feudal society. However, the dialectical relationship of the *zamindar* and the *jagirdari* system is cardinal in understanding the evolution of

medieval Indian society. As is well known, the Sultanat and especially the Mughal rulers tried to limit the power and prerogatives of the *zamindars*, as well as utilised the *zamindars* in the task of revenue collection.[1] Under the Mughals, a small proportion of the *zamindars* were offered *mansabs* and thus drawn closely into the central administrative system. However, the bulk of the *zamindars* were sought to be integrated into the working of the local land revenue system and the machinery for the maintenance of law and order. This was a complex process, with varying degrees of success in various areas, and depended upon a number of variables, such as the military strength of the *zamindar*, his association with the local community, the geographical location of the *zamindari*, etc.

Both caste and the structure of rural society played a significant role in the attempt of the Turkish and Mughal rulers to control and utilise the *zamindars* for their purposes. Recent evidence shows that though village society was segmented, a large proportion of cultivators who from ancient times had been considered owners of the land they cultivated, could not be dispossessed as long as they paid the land revenue. Moreover, bearing in mind the land-man ratio, cultivators were a major asset, and they could not be lightly dispensed with or forced to flee to neighbouring territories. These cultivators are called *khud-kasht* in seventeenth and eighteenth century Persian revenue documents. The *khud-kasht* formed a privileged group in village society with well-recognised hereditary rights and duties.[2] Dominating a village or a group of villages in a region, a predominant section of the *khud-kasht* was often drawn from one caste or clan. Thus, the Jats and Ahirs in north-western India, and Marathas in western India constituted the bulk of the privileged sections in many tracts of the regions. The local officials (*muqaddam*, *kulkarni*, *patel*, etc.) and even intermediary *zamindars* were often drawn from the *khud-kasht*. The Sultans and later, in a more systematic manner, the Mughals tried to establish direct relations with the cultivators in order to determine the productivity, nature of crops, etc., thereby setting up a system of revenue administration on the basis of

[1]S. Nurul Hasan, 'The Position of the *Zamindar* in the Mughal Empire', pp. 107-19.

[2]See Chapter IV for a review of the position and role of the *khud-kasht* and the *pahi-kasht*.

which they could fix and thereby limit the perquisites of the *zamindars*.

The growth of central authority and prestige under the Mughals, and the Mughal emphasis on justice, which broadly implied not permitting one group of people to encroach on the duties of another,[3] gradually created a situation in which various sections of society including the cultivators began to look to the central government, rather than to the local *zamindar* or chieftain, for protection and for the redress of their grievances if they went beyond a certain point. This led to the gradual development of a triangular or tripolar relationship between the central government, the *zamindars*, and the cultivators in which the *khud-kasht* predominated. This apparently was the basis of the so called 'Mughal stability'. This stability, which is a marked feature of the first half of the seventeenth century, lasted as long as the central government could convince the *zamindars* and the cultivators that it was more profitable for them to look to the central government for support and for the redress of their grievances than to join hands to resist and fight against it. The growth of the *pargana* administration and the *faujdari* system under the Mughals also aided this process. Unlike the *iqtadar* under the Sultanat, the Mughal *jagirdar* was largely divested of the administrative responsibility of the area assigned to him as *jagir*. The *faujdar* who was the lynchpin of the Mughal administrative system, had the dual responsibility of providing, where necessary, military support to the *jagirdar* in collecting his share of the land revenue, and also of providing a channel of redress against the exactions of the *jagirdar* and his agents, and the *zamindar*. The *waqianavis* was meant to watch over both the *jagirdar* and the *faujdar*. This system of checks and balances, rising up to the provincial and central levels, was an essential feature of the Mughal administrative system, and was designed as a safeguard against the abuse of power and authority at various levels.

By the very nature of medieval Indian society, the delicate social balance outlined above on which the Mughal administrative system rested was liable to be upset on a number of counts. The

[3] *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blochman, p. 4. See also the views of the contemporary poet, Tulsidasa for whom this was the basis of social stability, in Savitri Chandra, 'Two Aspects of Hindu Social Life and Thought as Reflected in the Works of Tulsidasa', *JESHO*, Vol. XIX (1976), pp. 48-60.

effects of a serious struggle for power at the centre, disaffection in the nobility, challenge to the empire by regional chiefs, etc., are some of the well-known factors. At the local and regional levels, augmentation of the power of the *zamindars*, directly or indirectly, or a serious weakening of the position of the *khud-kasht* could also have far-reaching consequences, though their effects were likely to be of a long ranging nature and hence are less well documented. Tensions at the village or local level, sometimes on a caste basis, or large scale local migrations also sometimes affected village society. Conflicts on a religious or ethnic basis could acquire an added historical significance, especially if it affected the villages.

Signs of a social and economic crisis appeared even during the first half of the seventeenth century, i.e., in the so-called period of stability. The crisis manifested itself in the shape of a financial and administrative crisis, viz., as a growing gap between the revenue needed for assignment to the *mansabdars* and its availability. Without going into details, we may only note that the situation had become so serious that Shah Jahan, shortly after his accession, had to take official note of it. The introduction of the rule of one-third/one-fourth, and the month scales (*mahwar*) was aimed at reducing the emoluments and the obligations of the *mansabdars* in order to bridge the gap between the requirement and availability of revenue. Thus, in the twenty-seventh year of his reign, Shah Jahan ordered that a *mansabdar* on cash salary should not be more than eight monthly or less than four monthly.[4]

There has been considerable controversy regarding the factors which led to the introduction of the rule of one-third/one-fourth and the month scale, and their impact on the total emoluments of the nobles. Without entering into this controversy here, it may not be far wrong to draw the inference that the lowering of the effective share of the nobles in the agricultural surplus reflected in reality a social and economic crisis which the Mughal ruling class tried to resolve by administrative means. Since the land revenue

[4] *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Vol. I, pp. 227-8. In 1652, the *hasil* of the four *subahs* in the Deccan was less than one-third. Aurangzeb as Viceroy of the Deccan complained bitterly of being saddled with *jagirs* which were less productive than in the north. (*Adab.* 31 a, 24 b; Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol I, Calcutta, 1912, pp. 99-100). The situation did not improve materially under Aurangzeb. See *Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's Reign*, ed., Y. Husain Khan (Hyderabad, 1958).

demand had already been placed at the highest rate possible,[5] any augmentation of the resources available to the Mughal ruling class could be obtained only by (a) a further expansion of the empire; (b) expansion and improvement of cultivation; (c) improvement and expansion of non-agricultural production and trade by application of science and technology; (d) efforts to squeeze the share of the various sections of agricultural classes to the point of diminishing returns. The Mughal ruling class or sections of it tried, in one way or another, all the methods outlined above. However, it was not able to solve the basic problem facing it, viz., the growing inadequacy of available revenue, largely because it was unable and unwilling to carry out any drastic changes in the existing social set-up, especially the agrarian relations which rested on the triad formed by the *jagirdars* (representing the central government, i.e., the Mughal ruling class), the *zamindars*, and the *khud-kasht* land owners or the dominant section of the cultivators. There is evidence to show that the dominant or privileged body of peasants were generally reluctant to permit the landless peasants, or peasants with dwarf holdings, who often belonged to the low castes, to become land owners although there was no shortage of cultivable waste land. A strong and confident central government could have taken the steps necessary to break the stranglehold of what modern sociologists might call 'the middle castes' on agricultural land, and provide to the under-privileged sections, viz., the low-caste preasants, the organisation and financial means which would enable them to bring uncultivated waste land under cultivation, and to acquire ownership rights over them. Although the Mughal government granted contracts on progressive rates (*istwah*) to those who brought virgin lands under cultivation, and inducements were held out to *pahis*, who were often drawn from the low castes, for rehabilitating ruined villages, setting up new villages, or for bringing surplus land under cultivation, a close reading of the sources suggests that the *pahis* entrusted with these tasks were generally those who had their own ploughs and oxen, i.e., those who were drawn from a comparatively privileged group in the village. Moreover, these activities were generally undertaken with the help of the local *zamindars* and *muqaddams* who, as we have noted above, generally belonged to the dominant landholding caste (s) in a village or region.[6] Thus, the Mughal

[5] Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 319.

[6] See Chapter XIII.

government remained largely dependent on the backing and support of the *zamindars* and the dominant land owning castes at the village level.

As is well known, the working of the Mughal revenue system depended upon the ability of the Mughal government and its local representatives, the *faujdars*, *jagirdars*, etc., to over-awe the *zamindars* and the cultivators with their superior military strength. However, the working of the rule of one-third/one-fourth and the month scale implied that the number of *sawars* employed by a *mansabdar* as well as the number and quality of the mounts were steadily lowered. Thus, a *mansabdar* of 4000/4000, if he had a *jagir* other than the *subah* in which he was posted, and held a five month *jagir*, employed 1000 *sawars* and 1000 horses. The number of *sawars* and the mounts was further reduced when the *jagir* was less than five monthly.[7] An adequate number of remounts was vital for the efficiency of the cavalry, and this had been ensured by the *dah-bisti* system under Akbar whereby a contingent of ten *sawars* had 20-22 horses. Under Shah Jahan, a five month *jagir* became fairly normal, thus impairing the efficiency of the cavalry. The traditional reluctance of the *mansabdars* in engaging themselves in battles where they might endanger their horses, was further aggravated. The reduced number of *sawars* weakened the ability and willingness of the Mughal *faujdars* to give adequate support to the *jagirdars* in the task of collecting their share of land revenue. Writing with special reference to the Deccan after the Mughal conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, Bhimsen says that *faujdars* who had only small contingents (*jamiat*) compared to the earlier times, sat at home and took no action against the Maratha freebooters. The *wakil* of the Amber ruler wrote back that *mansabdars* of 7000 maintained contingents of only 700, and that due to the ineffectiveness of the *faujdars*, royal princes and their sons were roaming the countryside like *faujdars*.[8] The inability of the *mansabdars* to realise the income due from their *jagirs*, in turn, further eroded their military capabilities. This situation is pin-pointed by Bhimsen who says that during the last part of

[7] *Khulasat-us-Siyaq*, Ms. Aligarh Muslim University, ff. 54 a-b; Lahori, *Badshah Nama*, Vol. II, ed., Maulvis Kabiruddin and Abdur Rahim (Calcutta, 1867-68), p. 507; Aziz, *Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army*, p. 85.

[8] Bhimsen, *Nushkha-i-Dilkusha*, Br. Mus. Or. 23 f. 139a; *Akhbarat* 27 *Ziqada* R.Y. 30/30 July 1693.

Aurangzeb's rule, except Rama Singh Hada, Dalpat Bundela and Jai Singh Kachawa, *who had their own watans*, no *mansabdar* maintained more than 1000 *sawars*.[9]

We have argued above that the fundamental basis for the *jagirdari* crisis was the medieval social system which limited agricultural growth, and the administrative system was reared on this structure, the two acting and reacting on each other. A number of other factors can be considered contributory factors to the growth of the crisis. Of these, the one cited most frequently is the growth in the size of the ruling class, i.e., of the nobility and their dependents both of whom, directly or indirectly, subsisted on the revenue resources of the empire. The growing ostentatious life style of the nobles limited the surplus available for expanding production, and this made for stagnation, i.e., a slow process of economic growth. However, this was common to all feudal societies, and hence hardly a new factor, ostentation itself depending on the size of the surplus. Aurangzeb was apparently concerned at the life style of the nobles, and tried to establish an atmosphere of austerity by his personal example, e.g., banning the use of gold and silver vessels as being un-Islamic, giving up the weighing ceremony, etc. But it was of little avail. It is also true that not all the expenditure incurred by the nobles could be considered unproductive. Thus, they did provide employment to the artisans and craftsmen, and patronage to the artists, but within the framework of slow economic growth.

There is little doubt that there was a rapid increase during the seventeenth century of the number of those hankering for royal service. In addition to the influx of 'adventurers' from Central Asia, the number of *khanazads*, i.e., sons and relations of *mansabdars* grew rapidly, the *mansabdars* having many wives and mistresses and, in consequence, many sons and sons-in-law. For political reasons, it was necessary to include into the ruling class a number of *zamindars*, first the Rajputs and later the Marathas in the Deccan. In addition to these, *shaikhzadas* (i.e., sons of religious divines), and even petty officials, professional people such as *hakims*, etc., hankered for *mansabs* since a *mansab* had become a mark of social prestige. We are told that under Jahangir, even *hakims* and wrestlers were awarded *mansabs*. In consequence, there was the emergence of what we may call 'lobbyists', i.e.,

[9]Bhimsen, f. 140b, emphasis mine.

groups and individuals who canvassed with the ruler for *mansabs* for their relations, groups, etc. The so called Irani, Turani factions, *khanazads* etc., were a part of these 'lobbies'.

On balance, both Shah Jahan and, up to a point, Aurangzeb coped with this situation fairly well. Despite the 'lobbyists', the growth in the numbers of the nobility and their *mansabs* did not seriously outrun the available revenue resources of the empire. Aurangzeb put a severe check on the growth of *mansabs* and *mansabdars* after his accession to the throne.[10] Even after the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, the growth in the numbers of the nobility was broadly matched by the additional *jama* of the two *subahs*.[11] But in the process, some of the internal problems of the *jagirdari* system were aggravated. First, the induction of new elements into the nobility adversely effected the *khanazads*. Khafi Khan, who himself belonged to the category of *khanazads*, complains bitterly that on account of the inadequacy of *pai baqi*, and the appointment of innumerable *mansabdars*, especially large numbers of Marathas and Deccanis, the *khanazads* would sometimes not be able to get *jagirs* for four to five years.[12] The working of the central machinery of administration itself was such that there was great delay in granting *jagirs* to new entrants.[13] The new entrants, apparently the *khanazads*, had to sign a bond (*muchalka*) that they would not claim salary for the period between the preparation of their *yad-dasht* (claim) and the allotment of the *jagir*. Despite this, the *diwan-i-tan*, Musawi Khan, insisted that they must appoint their forces during the interval, but little attention

[10]Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb* (Bombay, 1966), p. 10.

[11]For *jama* and *hasil* figures of the empire, see Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 399-409. J.F. Richards in *Mughal Administration of Golconda* (Oxford, 1975), p. 272, has emphasised that while the nobility grew by 23.5 per cent, the *jama* grew by 23 per cent. Since neither total numbers, nor total *mansabs* give an adequate idea of the total salary (*talab*) payable to the nobles, on the basis of rule of one-third/one-fourth and the month scale, the above may be considered only a broad approximation.

[12]Muhammed Hashin Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, Vols. I and II, eds., K.S. Ahmad and Wolsey Haig, (Calcutta, 1868-74) II, pp. 396-7. This is placed in R.Y. 35/1691-2.

[13]Mirza Yar Ali Khan, the *Darogha-i-Dak*, who was greatly favoured by Aurangzeb, remarked caustically, when the emperor objected that the man presented by him for grant of a *mansab* was too young in years, 'By the time he gets a jagir and is enrolled in the service, his hair would be grey.' Khafi Khan, Vol. II, pp. 378-9. This is placed in R.Y. 33/1689-90.

was paid to their demand for the arrears. Khafi Khan says, 'Gradually, all regulations disappeared, and accounting was given up.'[14]

After the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda, Aurangzeb tried to put a limit on the further growth of the number of *mansabdars*. He repeatedly declared that he did not need any new servants, and desired that no papers (*misl*) of new entrants be put up to him. But the *bakhshis*, under the pressure of the nobles, refused to cooperate. Ruhullah Khan, the *bakhshi*, continued to put fresh cases before the emperor on the plea that the empire consisted of seven Sultanats, i.e., it was vast, and that the emperor alone could say yes or no to to the large number of needy *khanazads*. Later, after the death of Ruhullah Khan, Aurangzeb angrily turned down all the requests of the *bakhshi*, Mukhlis Khan. This led to great lamentation in the camp among those who had waited for an appointment for years. Imperial signature, i.e., grant of a *jagir*, became like giving one pomegranate to a hundred sick.[15] Inability on the part of *mansabdars* to secure suitable *mansabs* for their children and relations was bound to affect the future loyalty of these nobles to the empire. The problem posed by the *khanazads* continued to deteriorate, and became even more acute in the eighteenth century, under the successors of Aurangzeb.

Second, in order to cope with the military requirements of the empire, both Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb expanded the imperial *khalisa* or reserved lands. From one-ninth under Jahangir it grew

[14] Khafi Khan, Vol. II, pp. 396-7. The author states that the *mansabdars* claimed the arrears of salary despite the *muchalka*, so that substantial sums were owed to the *mansabdars* by the imperial government. However much the *mansabdars* wanted the account to be settled, the *mustaufi* paid no heed to it, and if a *mansabdar* as a result of his efforts, and with the support of protectors and his *wakil*, was able to establish his claim for a substantial amount, with great difficulty he would be able to get one-fourth of his demand.

[15] Khafi Khan, Vol. II, 411-2 (R.Y. 35/1691-2), 602. I have not agreed with the translation of the latter passage in Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* (London, 1867-77), Vol. VII, p. 403. It is interesting to note that in another context, when Inayatullah Khan, the *diwan-i-tan-o-khalisa*, had complained to the emperor that the *pai baqi* was limited, while the number of applicants for a *jagir* was unlimited, Aurangzeb had observed that the world, i.e., the empire was vast, and that he should not lose heart (*Ahkam* 57).

to one-fifth under Aurangzeb.[16] While there is no evidence that the increase of the *khalisa* created a shortage of *pai baqi* lands, i.e., lands reserved for assignment in *jagirs* to the *mansabdars*, the manner of the demarcation of the *khalisa* lands created acute problems. The imperial *mutasaddis* usually chose for the *khalisa*, *jagirs* which were *sair-hasil*, i.e., which were productive and easily manageable, leaving the *mansabdars* to deal with the less productive *jagirs*, especially those located in *zor-talab* areas, i.e., areas where realisation was difficult due to the strength of the *zamindars* and the recalcitrance of the land owners. According to the *Hidayat-ul-Qawaid*,[17] the earlier rule was that *subahdars* should have one-fourth *jagir* in *zor-talab* and rest in *ausat* (medium) areas; *diwans*, *bakhshis* and high grandees half in *ausat* and rest in *raiyati* areas; and the small *mansabdars* entirely in *raiyati* areas. It is difficult to say to what extent this was actually followed. However, it was thrown to the winds in large areas during the latter part of Aurangzeb's rule. Thus, we are told that Murshid Quli Khan brought large areas in Bengal under *khalisa*, assigning to *mansabdars jagirs* in the *zor-talab* areas in Orissa.[18] Aurangzeb followed a similar policy in the Deccan after the conquest of Bijapur and Golconda.[19]

Another practice mentioned by Khafi Khan, was that though many of the *jagirs* were lying waste (*viran*), and their realisation amounted to almost nothing, the wretched *mutasaddis* continued to demand from the *jagirdars* payment for the feed of the animals (*khurak dawab*), and imprisoned the agents of the *jagirdars* for the purpose.[20] The struggle for *sair-hasil jagirs* thus became a matter of life and death for *mansabdars*, and allowed the royal *mutasaddis* the opportunity to resort to all kinds of corrupt practices, including frequent transfers, of which Bhimsen complains

[16]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 272-3. A considerable part remained under *khalisa* in the conquered states of Bijapur and Golconda to provide for Mughal campaigns against the Marathas, and in the Karnataka.

[17]Hidayatullah Bihari, *Hidayat-ul-Qawaid*, Aligarh Muslim University Ms., f. 8a.

[18]This is referred to in a letter of S. Abdullah Khan to Murshid Quli Khan in 1720. See *Balmukand Nama*, ed., Satish Chandra (Bombay, 1972), letter No. 20; Salimullah, *Tawarikh-i-Bangala*, I.O. Ms. 2995, ff. 36a-45b.

[19]Inayat Jung Collection, National Archives, New Delhi, 1/7/105; J.F. Richards, *Golconda*, pp. 158-9.

[20]Khafi Khan, Vol II, p. 602.

bitterly.[21] Obviously, the smaller *mansabdars* were the worst hit.

The working of the *jagirdari* regulations also created problems. According to the branding regulations, when a noble failed to produce a contingent of requisite numbers and horses of the requisite quality, his *jagir* was to be resumed and brought under *pai baqi*. Due to the growing difficulties of realising their share of the revenue from the *zamindars* and the land holders in the Deccan, many *mansabdars* failed to satisfy these conditions. As a result, large areas came under *pai baqi* and often remained unassigned for long periods.[22]

From the foregoing account it would appear that there was not so much an absolute shortage of lands available for distribution in *jagirs*, as great delay in the grant of *jagirs* to the new entrants which affected the *khanazads* most, and the shortage of *sair-hasil jagirs* to the others, especially to the smaller *mansabdars*. That there was no real shortage of *pai baqi* lands has led some modern historians to deny the existence of a *jagirdari* crisis. However, the crisis of the *jagirdari* system should not be confused with *be jagiri* which affected the new entrants rather than the existing incumbents. Central to the growth of the crisis of the *jagirdari* system was its increasing non-functionality, i.e., its inability to help in the maintenance of law and order and the collection of the central share of the land revenue over large parts of the empire. This, in turn, was bound to have repurcussions on the rest of the empire in due course.

It has also been argued that a tendency to raise the revenue demand to a still higher magnitude, even beyond the level of subsistence, 'derived from the very nature of the *jagirdari* system', for a *jagirdar* who could not hope to hold his *jagir* for more than three to four years, could never follow a farsighted policy of agricultural development.[23] While conceding that the interests of an individual *jagirdar* and the imperial administration did not necessarily coincide, the Mughal administrative machinery was designed to check abuse of power by individual *jagirdars*, and

[21]Bhimsen, f. 139a.

[22]J.F. Richards, *Golconda*, pp. 199-201. This is based on the papers in the Inayat Jung Collection. Whether this phenomenon was confined to some areas in the Deccan, or was a more general feature, needs to be studied further.

[23]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 320.

blatant abuse would have been checked *as long as the machinery of administration functioned normally*. Such a breakdown, it appears, did take place in some parts of the Deccan during the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, but it did not become a general feature till, in the eighteenth century, the central machinery of the administration was paralysed by factionalism and struggle between the *wazirs* and the monarch. Secondly, it should be remembered that the *jagirdars* supervised and generally collected the land revenue from a hereditary class holding superior rights in land, viz., the *zamindars*. There is little evidence to show that if the state had not centralised a large part of the revenue surplus through the *jagirdari* system, but left a larger part of it to the *zamindars*, the latter would have used it for the expansion and improvement of cultivation. The arguments of Bernier[24] and other European visitors of the time, that a hereditary landed aristocracy was a guarantor against oppression by the ruler, and that such a class would be an improving class is not borne out by the experience of the Rajputs and the Marathas, or the colonial period in India, nor any European country, excluding England.

As a matter of fact, Bhimsen argued *not* against the practice of transfer of *jagirs* as such, but against too frequent a transfer. Bhimsen says that uncertainty on the part of the *mansabdars* whether they would remain in possession of the *jagir* during the following year, exactions of the royal *mutasaddis* from the hapless *jagirdar*, and the latter's practice of taking a large advance payment (*qabz*) from the *amil* led to the neglect of the *jagir* and the ruination of the cultivators.[25] Hawkins, who had been awarded a *mansab* and *jagir* by Jahangir, complains bitterly of frequent transfers of *jagirs*.[26] Were transfers of *jagirs* more frequent under Aurangzeb than under earlier rulers? Did they affect the entire Mughal empire or only parts of it, especially those in the Deccan? Did they apply to high as well as to low grandees? Without answering these questions it would be rash to make generalisations on the basis of Bhimsen's statement. Possibly, Bhimsen

[24]Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire*, tr., A. Constable (Westminster 1891), p. 227. Bernier considered transferability of *jagirs* as the source of *all* evil in the Mughal empire, including oppression of peasants and artisans.

[25]Bhimsen, f. 139a.

[26]Hawkins, in *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, ed., W. Foster (London 1921), p. 14: 'A man cannot continue half a yere in his living, but it is taken from him.'

who was himself a small *mansabdar*, may have generalised the experience of small *mansabdars* who were at the mercy of the royal *mutasaddis*. As for the bigger *mansabdars*, they generally had to collect their share of the land revenue from big *zamindars*, some of whom possessed considerable military strength. As long as the *zamindars* as a class remained strong, frequent transfers of a *jagirdar* would not have affected the cultivators of the area to the extent made out by Bhimsen. As we have argued above, during Aurangzeb's reign, the *zamindars* of the Deccan and many other areas had become stronger *vis-a-vis* the *jagirdars* than in the earlier period, and the latter would hardly have been in a position to charge more than their sanctioned dues. Also, there are many examples of important Mughal *mansabdars* holding their *jagirs* for as long as ten years or more. According to a recent study,[27] large *mansabdars* accounted for over 80 per cent of the land assigned in *jagir*, and since transfer of *jagir* held by these *mansabdars* may not have been as frequent, the impact of frequent transfers of smaller *jagirdars* on the peasantry and on the agrarian system should not be overestimated. In fact, not frequent transfers but the decay of the practice of periodic transfers of *jagirs* during the eighteenth century made the *jagirs* hereditary, and led to the further strengthening of the *zamindars* as a class. This accompanied and was followed by a gradual weakening of administrative checks which left the land owners and cultivators at the mercy of the new *jagirdars* and *zamindars*, thus paving the way for the disintegration of the empire.

Little detailed study has been done of the processes whereby the *zamindars* strengthened themselves as a class and squeezed the cultivators in various ways. It has been argued that the Mughal policy of integrating the *zamindars* with the machinery of administration for realising land revenue from the cultivators, and also of giving them a guaranteed portion of the produce by including it in the *jama*, itself tended to strengthen the position of the *zamindars*. This, and the policy of extending and improving cultivation with the help and cooperation of the *zamindars* tended, in the long run, to identify the Mughal administration es-

[27] A. Jan Qaisar, 'Distribution of the Revenue Resources of the Mughal Empire among the Nobility', *Procs., IHC*, 1967, pp. 239-40. This included *mansabdars* holding ranks of 500 *zat* and above in the twentieth year of Shah Jahan's reign.

pecially at the local level more closely with the *zamindars*, thus in turn alienating the cultivators including the *khud-kasht* who had looked to the Mughal ruler for protection against local oppression. Reference has been made to the rise of opposition movements during the seventeenth century such as the Maratha and Jat movements. These are complex phenomena and cannot be regarded either as a simple manifestation of peasant discontent against the Mughal state due to over-exploitation, or a protest against the religious policies of the state. In both cases, the leadership was provided by smaller *zamindars*. There was clearly a divergence between the interests of the leaders who were claiming a better position for themselves in the prevailing socio-political set-up, and the sections of the peasantry who had rallied round them in the hope of justice—a term which could include such divergent things as a peasant utopia of egalitarianism, and an end to local oppression. In any case, these movements affected the moral position of the Mughal emperor, and tended to undermine the belief that he would act as the ultimate arbiter in case of oppression and injustice at any level.

Commenting on the situation brought about by the rise of the Marathas, the weakening of the position of the *jagirdars* in local administration and the growing strength and power of the *zamindars*, Bhimsen says, 'The province given to the *mansabdars* in *tankhwah* cannot be governed because of the smallness of their force (*jamiat*). The *zamindars* too have assumed strength, joined the Marathas, enlisted armies (*jamiat*) and laid the hands of oppression on the country.' Bhimsen goes on to say, 'Their (the *zamindars*') oppression has no limit. The *zamindars* pay not a *dam* or a *darham* out of their pockets, but take it from the *riaya* and make the payment.'[28]

The strength and assertiveness of the *zamindars*, and the ineffectiveness of the *jagirdars* were opposite sides of the same coin. The net result was manifest inability to protect the landholders (*riaya*). The Mughals were thus unable to maintain, much less consolidate, the social balance which had enabled the Mughal central government to stand forth as the champion of the cultivators, and on that basis, to isolate the *zamindars*, reduce their perquisites, and centralise a large proportion of the revenue surplus. The growing crisis was not confined to the Deccan but

[28]Bhimsen, ff. 139 a-b.

extended to the north, as was shown by the Jat and other rebellions. The growing social imbalance was accompanied by an administrative and financial crisis, the two acting and reacting on each other.

Thus, the *jagirdari* system was a complex phenomenon closely linked to the structure and working of the village society, and the working of the Mughal system of administration both at the central and the local levels. The crisis of the *jagirdari* system leading to a breakdown in the eighteenth century was an outcome of a complex interplay between these social and adminstrative factors.

VII

Writings on Social History of Medieval India: Trends and Prospects

THE STUDY of social and economic history as a distinct branch or sub-discipline of history can be traced back to the writings of W.H. Moreland and K.M. Ashraf. In his book, *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study* (London, 1920), Moreland prepared the ground for a systematic study of economic and social history. His attempt to assess the population of India towards the beginning of the seventeenth century, his analysis of the role of the consuming classes, particularly the Mughal nobility, in the development of the country, and his trenchant remarks on the position of the peasants, the urban workers, the middle class and the serfs, slaves, servants and retainers led to a lively debate among Indian historians. Unfortunately, some of the limitations of Moreland's approach vitiated the value of his pioneering work. The scholarly world was as yet unaware of the mass of contemporary documents which lay in the various libraries and record offices in India. In fact, the work of indexing these documents, preparing summaries and, where necessary, making extensive abstracts for the utilisation of these documents by historians has hardly begun. This being so, it was natural for Moreland to have drawn largely on European sources. However, he went further. He not only discounted the existence of documentary material in India for the seventeenth century, but also tended to regard European sources as being more reliable *per se* than Indian sources.

Published in *IHR*, Vol. III, No. 2, January 1977, pp. 267-85. The study was prepared by the author for and with the help of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, in 1974. However, a few of the subsequent publications have been added.

Secondly, he attempted to institute a comparison between the economic position of peasants in Akbar's India and that prevailing in British India before the First World War. In view of the paucity of the available sources for a study of the social and economic life of the peasants, the attempt at retrodiction* was perhaps the only method available. However, Moreland also wanted to rebut the nationalist charge that the condition of the Indian people had deteriorated under British rule.

A nationalist answer to Moreland was provided by Brij Narain in his book, *Indian Economic Life, Past and Present* (Lahore, 1929).[1] In doing so, the author largely ignored the later works of Moreland, especially his book, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb: A Study of Indian Economic History* (London, 1923), where he had abandoned his earlier polemical approach and tried to bring out some of the developmental elements in Indian economy, even though these were ascribed to the effects of European commercial enterprise in opening up the European markets to India.[2]

During the period 1920 to 1947, the energies of Indian historians were devoted mainly to the study of political and administrative history. In some of these works, social and economic history was included as an addendum in one or two chapters at the end. These chapters dealt, among other things, with administration, art and architecture, and religious beliefs. This implied that while the historians were aware of social and economic aspects, they did not consider them fit subject for serious study. A few works dealing exclusively with social and economic history were, however, written during the period. Among these may be listed Bal Krishna's *Commercial Relations Between India and England (1601-1757)* (London, 1924); Shafaat Ahmad Khan's *The East India Trade in the Seventeenth Century in Its Political*

*retrodiction: to infer (a past state of affairs) from present observational data.

[1]Another work which tried to rebut some of Moreland's arguments was H.L. Chablani's *The Economic Conditions of India during the Sixteenth Century* (Delhi, 1929).

[2]J.N. Sarkar agrees with this in his 'Indigo as a Form of Commercial Agriculture in India during the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Dr. S. Mookerji Felicitation Volume* (Varanasi, 1969). See Jan Kieniewicz, 'The Portuguese Factory and Trade in Pepper in Malabar during the Sixteenth Century', *IESHR*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1969), pp. 61-84 for a somewhat different view. See also T. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company on the Coromandel Coast 1605-1690*, (The Hague, 1962).

and Economic Aspects (London, 1923); D. Pant's *The Commercial Policy of the Moghuls* (Bombay, 1930); K.M. Ashraf's *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan 1200-1500* (Calcutta, 1935; 2nd edn. Delhi, 1959); B.A. Saletore's *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire*, Vols. I, II (Madras, 1934); T.V. Mahalingam's *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar* (Madras, 1940); S.P. Chablani's *Economic Conditions in Sind 1592-1843* (Bombay, 1951); etc. In most of these studies also there was no clear focus on social history, for it was appended to either economic or cultural history. Thus, in his work on Vijayanagar, Mahalingam dealt with the following aspects: social life, castes and communities, social institutions such as marriage and *sati*, women, court life, habitation, food and dress, luxuries, games and amusements, religion, education and literature and, finally, art, sculpture and painting. Ashraf dealt with the various social classes, rural life, the standard of life, domestic life, social and domestic comforts, amusements and recreations, manners, etc.[3]

Hardly any attention was paid to analysing the structure of society, the interrelations between various classes, groups and sub-groups, the value systems prevailing in different segments of society and its impact on political, economicand cultural processes, particularly the processes of change and its levers. Nevertheless, these works did call the attention of historians to the possibility of extracting from the existing sources material information on social and economic aspects. From this point of view, Ashraf's work became a classic and provided a perspective for the study of the social and economic history of the entire medieval period. In particular, by pointing to the wide disparities between the living standards of the ruling classes and the common people, it helped in checking the trend towards an uncritical adulation of the pre-British period. Ashraf also showed that in the medieval period, the religious classes basically subserved the interests of the ruling classes. Thus, both were interested in the creation and stabilisation of a large territorial 'Muslim' empire in the country.

During this period there was considerable interest among historians regarding the nature of the state in medieval India. The problem was generally approached either from a political angle—whether the state was a plain and simple military despotism or it had some benevolent aspects—or from a religious point of view—

[3]K.M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions*.

whether the state was a theocracy, theocentric or essentially secular. To a limited extent, it was also approached from a cultural point of view—whether the state was an agent for destroying Hindu culture or a means for developing a new culture based on a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures.[4] However, the socio-economic base of the state, the pattern of distribution of power between different segments of society and between different sections in the ruling classes, etc., were hardly investigated.

The period between 1947 and 1956 saw hardly any departures or new methodological approaches in the study of social history.[5] A groping towards a new direction may, however, be discerned in T. Raychaudhuri's book, *Bengal under Akbar and Jehangir: An Introductory Study in Social History* (Calcutta, 1953). In this connection it may be noted that there has been a rich tradition in Bengal of studying social history on the basis of literary and religious works (*Mangal-kavyas*). Though somewhat deficient in critical approach, some of these works are valuable for the social and cultural history of Bengal. Tapan Raychaudhuri used the concept of social history adopted by G.M. Trevelyan in his well-known book, *English Social History* (London, 1944). He also scrutinised religious texts 'from a commonsense point of view for the collection of socially significant data'. The brief that religious texts and literary works could by themselves help in unravelling

[4]In this connection see Beni Prasad, *History of Jahangir* (Allahabad, 1922); J. Sarkar, *Aurangzeb*, Vol. III (Calcutta, 1928); Ishwari Prasad, *Medieval India* (Allahabad, 1933); Ibn Hasan, *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (London, 1933; rpt., Karachi, 1970); R.P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration* (Allahabad, 1936); I.H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (Delhi, 1942; 2nd revised edn., Karachi, 1958); M.L. Roychoudhry, *State and Religion in Mughal India* (Calcutta, 1951); etc. More recent works based on the approach outlined above are H.N. Sinha, *The Development of Indian Polity* (Bombay, 1953); Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I (Delhi, 1961) and *Society and State in Medieval India* (Faridabad, 1961); *The Medieval Indian State* (Punjab, n.d.). A departure from the established trend of thinking on the subject was, however, made by M. Habib in his Introduction to the reprint of Elliot and Dowson's *History of India*, Vol. II (Aligarh, 1952). See also M. Habib and Afsar Jehan Begum, *Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanat* (Allahabad, n.d).

[5]See the perceptive remark of D.P. Mukerji regarding 'neglect of the genuine bonds of India, caste, family life, the village community, particular type of religious dynamics' in 'Philosophy of History', *Diversities* (New Delhi, 1958).

the complex strands of socio-economic relationships and throw light on the lives of the common people was, however, to a considerable extent, belied by the work.[6] At a time when the European tradition of the study of the sociology of religion had hardly developed in India, and the complex socio-economic relationships in medieval India had not been worked out with the help of contemporary documents, administrative tracts, etc., religious texts could only provide a somewhat disjointed picture.[7]

It soon became apparent that religious texts by themselves could not throw much light on the condition of the masses, or the structure of society, for most of them were based on texts written by or for the upper classes. Hence, they were more likely to reflect the customs, manners and morals of the upper classes.[8] A more critical study of heterodox sects and of their writings in order to study social tensions and conflicts had yet to begin. The main focus of the study of social history during the period remained on the descriptive study of society—dress, food, manners and customs, fairs and festivals, court life, etc. This approach to social history continues in many universities and has resulted in the proliferation of many books and theses.[9] While useful in themselves, they hardly constitute a new approach to the subject. The

[6]A decade and a half later, the author noted in his Introduction to the second impression of the book (p. 1) that it was 'not a study in social history, introductory or otherwise, though it contains a fair amount of material which is the stuff of social history.' (Calcutta, 1969)

[7]This was largely the conclusion arrived at by S. Nurul Hasan, who wrote a brilliant thesis on *The Chistī and Suharwardy Silsilahs in Northern India during the Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries* (unpublished Ms., Oxford University, consulted with the permission of the author). Many eminent historians, notably R.P. Tripathi, Tara Chand and M. Habib, had earlier expressed the opinion that the study of those religious movements in which the masses had been involved was the best way of studying the lives of the common people and for understanding the structure of medieval Indian society.

[8]See, for instance, Raj Bali Pande, *Hindu Samskaras: A Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments* (Banaras, 1949); P. Thomas, *Hindu Religion, Manners and Customs* (Bombay, n.d).

[9]See, for instance, P.N. Chopra, *Some Aspects of Society and Culture during the Mughal Age* (Agra, 1963); Rekha Misra, *Women in Mughal India* (Delhi, 1957); A. Karim, *Society and Culture in Medieval India* (Calcutta, 1969); K.P. Sahu, *Some Aspects of North Indian Social Life (1000-1526)* (Calcutta, 1973); M.A. Ansari, *Court Life of the Mughals* (Delhi, 1974); etc.

same outlook is reflected in the Vidya Bhavan series on Indian history.[10]

There has been a considerable broadening and deepening of the study of social history in India since 1956. Though much of the thinking is contained in articles in various journals, a number of significant works have been produced. In the following pages, we shall try to identify the major trends, mentioning some of the works and articles which have had a definite impact on the thinking on the subject.

One major trend has been the attempt to make a systematic study of the ruling classes in medieval India. Attention has, in particular, been focused on the position and role of the *zamindars* and the nobility, their mutual interaction, and their role in the state. As far as the nobility is concerned, in some of the earlier writings,[11] attention had been focused on analysing its relationship with the monarch, and, to a lesser extent, on its racial and ethnic character. The foreign character of the nobility and the conflicts between its ethnic components were considered to be two of the main factors responsible for a lack of inner stability in the nobility during the Sultanat period. Blochmann[12] noted the foreign character of the nobility under Akbar, and Moreland endorsed the opinion of the seventeenth century French traveller, Francois Bernier, that the Mughal nobility consisted of 'foreign adventures who enticed each other to court'. Little attempt was made to study the social origins of the nobility, or its links with various elements in Indian society.

A more critical study of the nobility started with Satish Chandra's *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-40* (Aligarh, 1959; 3rd edn., New Delhi, 1979), in which the foreign

[10]In Volume VI of the series, *The Delhi Sultanate* (Bombay, 1960), social life is divided into Hindu society and Muslim religion and society. The former deals with social divisions and sub-divisions, slavery, marriage, position of women, food and drinks, standard of living, trends in general manners and character.

[11]See, for instance, A.C. Banerji, *Medieval Studies* (Calcutta, 1958); R.P. Khosla, *Kingship and Nobility* (Allahabad, 1934). See also the early writings of M. Habib, which have been brought together and edited by K.A. Nizami under the title, *Politics and Society during the Early Medieval Period*, Vol. I (Delhi, 1974).

[12]*Ain-i-Akbari*, Vols. I and II, tr., Blochmann; W.H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* (London, 1920).

character of the Mughal nobility was questioned and factionalism in the nobility was sought to be related to a growing crisis of the *jagirdari* system. It was suggested that the fall of the Mughal empire was largely a result of the growing social crisis in the empire which, in turn, was traceable to the class, ethnic and regional tensions prevailing in medieval society. This approach entailed and was a part of a process which shifted the study on the decline and fall of the Mughal empire from political to social causes, and to the study of the underlying contradictions and tensions in the medieval social system.

In a detailed study of the organisation and composition of the Mughal nobility under Aurangzeb, M. Athar Ali[13] adopted for the first time a statistical approach for analysing the position of the different ethnic and religious groups as well as the hereditary element in the nobility and the inter-penetration of the *zamindars* with the official nobility. It had been hoped that this work would be one of a series devoted to the study of the Mughal nobility. Unfortunately, no other work in the series has been completed.[14] A separate work on the nobility under the Delhi Sultanat has, however, been written by S.B.P. Nigam, and another on the Lodis by Iqtedar Siddiqi.[15] In the latter work, the general belief among historians that the Afghan polity in India was essentially tribal has been questioned. Nigam's work, while useful in itself, has hardly broken any fresh ground. Perhaps a comparative study of the nobility in the Delhi Sultanat with the nobility in West Asian states during the period might have provided a new dimension.

Significant work has been done during the period on the position and role of the *zamindars* under the Mughals. The main effort has been (i) to examine the rights of the *zamindars* in land, (ii) stratification among the *zamindars*, (iii) their social back-

[13] *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb.*

[14] A few theses have been written on the subject in a number of universities, more or less on traditional lines. See, for instance, P.K. Abrol, *Role of the Nobility under Babur and Humayun*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Allahabad, 1964).

[15] S.B.P. Nigam, *Nobility under the Delhi Sultanate* (Delhi, 1968); I.H. Siddiqi, *Afghan Despotism in India* (Aligarh, 1969). For nobility in the pre-Turkish period, apart from R.S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism* (University of Calcutta, 1965 2nd edn., Delhi 1980), see B.N.S. Yadava, *Society and Culture in North India in the Twelfth Century* (Allahabad, 1973).

ground with particular reference to the caste, tribal and clan structures, and (iv) their social, economic, administrative and cultural roles. Not all of these are germane to our discussion here. Nor is it possible to list all the available literature on the subject. The best general work on the subject is still Irfan Habib's *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963). The position and role of the different strata of *zamindars* has been analysed by S. Nurul Hasan in an article, 'The Position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire'.[16] Noman Ahmad Siddiqi in his work, *Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals 1700-1750* (Bombay, 1970), also tried to analyse the position of different strata of *zamindars*, particularly in Gujarat. Some limited work has been done analysing the position of the *zamindars* in different parts of the country.[17]

Hardly any work has been done so far on the social background of the *zamindars*, especially their caste, tribe and clan affiliations. Some indications of the importance of this aspect may be seen in Irfan Habib's article, 'The Zamindars in the Ain',[18] Satish Chandra's 'Shivaji and the Maratha Landed Elements',[19] and A.R. Khan's *Chieftains in the Mughal Empire during the Reign of Akbar* (Simla, 1977).

The rise of the middle class during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its role in the struggle for independence has naturally roused the interest of historians regarding its antecedents. Recently both B.B. Misra and Tara Chand have touched upon this theme.[20] Both have come to the same conclusion as

[16] *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1964; also in R.E. Frykenberg, ed., *Land Control and Social Structure in India* (New Delhi, 1973); B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights'; I.H. Qureshi, 'Village Economy in the Indo-Pak Sub-continent in the Middle Ages', *JPHS*, Vol. I, Pt. I, 1953.

[17] H. Fukazawa, 'A Study of the Local Administration of Adilshahi Sultanate (A.D. 1489-1686)', *HJE*; S.N. Hasan, 'Aspects of Zamindari System in the Deccan', *Procs., IHC*, 1969; Dilbagh Singh, 'Position of *Patil* in Eastern Rajasthan', *Procs., IHC*, 1970; etc.

[18] *Procs., IHC*, 1958.

[19] R.S. Sharma and Vivekanand Jha, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings (In Memory of D.D. Kosambi)* (Delhi, 1974; 2nd edn., 1977). See also Amalendu Guha, 'Land Rights and Social Classes in Medieval Assam', *IESHR*, Vol. III, No. 3, 1966.

[20] B.B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (London, 1961); Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement*, Vol. I (Delhi, 1961). In this connection, see also W.C. Smith, 'The Mughal Empire and the Middle Classes', *Islamic Culture*, 1944.

Moreland, that is, there was no middle class as such in medieval India. However, neither B.B. Misra nor Tara Chand have approached the question from the viewpoint of the medieval society in its totality and the part played in it by the middle class(es). Rather, they consider the European or the English middle class as normative and refuse to recognise that there was a middle class in India because it does not measure up to its European counterpart, economically or politically.[21] Present thinking on the subject has, however, moved in a different direction. The various components of the middle strata—the commercial and financial sections, the lesser official functionaries, and the professional classes (physicians, scholars, artists, etc.)—are being studied from a functional as well as a structural point of view. However, the social background, interrelations, social mores and attitudes of these subgroups have received hardly any attention so far.[22] Greater attention has been paid to analysing the social and economic role of the commercial and financial classes—the *saudagars*, *mahajans*, *sarrafs*, *dallals*, etc.—and their regional formations.[23] Some

[21]This point has been made by Tara Chand in his book. For a different view, see Satish Chandra, Presidential address, Medieval India Section, *Procs., IHC*, 1968.

[22]This has been attempted by Iqtidar Alam Khan in his Presidential Address, Medieval India Section, Indian History Congress, Aligarh, 1975.

[23]See, for instance, Irfan Habib, 'Usury in Medieval India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. VI, No. 4, 1964; A.R. Kulkarni, 'Banking in Maharashtra in the Seventeenth Century', *Procs., IHC*, 1965; Ashin Das Gupta, 'The Merchants of Surat, 1700-50', in Edmund Leach and S.M. Mukherjee, ed., *Elites in South Asia* (Cambridge, 1970); Indrani Ray, 'The French Company and the Merchants of Bengal: 1680-1730', *IESHR*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1971; Surendra Gopal, 'Armenian Traders in India in the Seventeenth Century', in A. Guha, ed., *Studies in Central Asia* (Delhi, 1970); Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Role of the Gosains in the Economy of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Upper India', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4, 1964; J.W. Fischer, 'The Jewish Merchant Colony in Madras during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *JESHO*, Vol. III, 1960; K.R. Venkatarama Ayyar, 'Medieval Trade, Crafts and Merchant Guilds in South India', *JIH*, Vol. XXV, Pt. 3, 1947; A.J. Qaisar, 'Role of Brokers in Medieval India', *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1974; Om Prakash, 'The European Trading Companies and the Merchants of Bengal, 1650-1725', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1964; Dilbagh Singh, 'The Role of the Mahajans in the Rural Economy of Eastern Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century', *Social Scientist*, May 1974; S. Arasaratnam, 'Aspects of Role and Activities of South Indian Merchants (1650-1750)', *Procs., First International Conference of Tamil Studies* (Kuala Lumpur, 1968); etc.

attention has been paid to the organisation of the mercantile community as well, the nature of its network and its relation with the administrators. In this field, the social and economic aspects have tended to converge. The major question, whether sufficient surplus was being generated in medieval Indian society to ensure growth, and the pattern of its distribution, is as much a social (and cultural) question as an economic one. The question whether there were potentialities of growth in medieval Indian society and whether India was capable of developing a higher, that is, a capitalist order, raises multi-dimensional problems—relations of production, institutional factors including the nature of the state and of the ruling classes, the level of technological skills available, demographic trends, the role of the superstructure including the role of the ruling classes, ideological trends, value structure, etc.

Broadly speaking, Moreland's point that there was little possibility of capitalist development in medieval India without foreign intervention has been supported by Irfan Habib and Morris D. Morris,[24] though the arguments put forward by them differ. The Soviet historians, Pavlov and Chicherov,[25] on the other hand, speak of the growing crisis of feudalism which was leading to a breakdown during the eighteenth century, and seem to visualise the possibility of an indigenous growth of capitalism in India. Some others have suggested that as long as there was sufficient surplus cultivable land available, the institutional forms which had been developed over the centuries for exploiting this situation continued to operate, the land-man ratio did not exceed a certain point, and handicrafts continued to provide an outlet and surplus employment to sizable numbers, the crisis created by feudal stagnation of the economy could be postponed, though not resolved. It has also been suggested that the possibilities of capitalist development should not be studied treating India as a whole as the unit of study. As in Europe, growth points have to be studied on a regional basis. This would imply a careful study of the

[24]Irfan Habib, 'Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India', *JEH*, April 1969; Morris D. Morris, 'Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History', *IESHR*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1968 and 'Values as An Obstacle to Economic Growth in South Asia', *JEH*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4.

[25]V.I. Pavlov, *Indian Capitalist Class: A Historical Perspective* (Delhi, 1964); A.I. Chicherov, *Indian Economic Development in the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries* (Moscow, 1971).

development in such sub-regions as Gujarat, the Coromandal coast, and possibly Bengal.[26] Not much progress has been made in this direction so far. The controversy has, however, created a great deal of interest in the problems of growth in medieval India.[27]

The problem of the middle classes in medieval India is also linked up with the caste system. The assumption, for instance, that the commercial classes were largely drawn from the *vaishya* community does not hold good for all regions of the country. Thus, in the Punjab, the Khatris had always been active in commerce. Recent evidence from eastern Rajasthan shows that the *mahajans*, who played an important role in the economic life of the village as well as in the process of administration by standing surety to contractors, *zamindars*, as well as to the village community, did not belong to any one caste, but were drawn from the category of the prosperous *khud-kasht* peasants.[28] The Bohras of Gujarat, as also the Multani merchants were Muslims. The Jains also were a mercantile community and played an important part in western Indian trade. The morphology of the mercantile community in medieval India has yet to be studied properly. Similarly, a study has yet to be made of the social background of the professional and administrative classes whose development was the inescapable concomitant to the growth of a bureaucratised feudal state in seventeenth century India. Admission to posts in the bureaucracy signified elevation to the category of the *ashraf* (the elite or, as in Bengal, the *bhadralok*) and hence had a social significance as well.

A number of books have been written on medieval towns in India, which record a definite growth of towns during the seventeenth century and even up to the middle of the eighteenth century, though some of the older towns such as Delhi were

[26]See, for instance, Chapters IV and XII.

[27]While the earlier assumption that caste was an inhibiting factor in growth is no longer accepted, it has been strongly argued by some that the value system may be the key. In this connection, apart from the writings of Morris D. Morris mentioned above, see also S. Bhattacharya, 'Cultural and Social Constraints on Technological Innovation and Economic Development: Some Case Studies', *IESHR*, Vol. III, No. 3, 1966.

[28]Dilbagh Singh, 'The Role of the Mahajans in the Rural Economy of Eastern Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century', *Social Scientist*, May 1974.

declining.[29] However, little attempt has so far been made to study the wider social implications of this development. Nor has any significant new work been done regarding the pattern of the lives of the common people in the towns, particularly of the artisans, labourers, domestics and others. Even a cursory study shows that a large number of artisans and craftsmen in different parts of the country were engaged in the production of textiles.[30] A significant work on the subject, covering both urban and rural artisans, is that of Chicherov,[31] who has attempted to link the institutions of caste and village community with the development of a money economy in the context of the changing pattern of the structure and organisations of the artisans. The *jajmani* system, that is, the position and role of rural handicraftsmen, has been extensively studied by sociologists, though it has till now received scant attention from historians. The merit of Chicherov's work is that it does not adopt a static framework which has often been the case with the sociologists. However, Chicherov's conclusion that the traditional feudal relations were breaking down is not substantiated by the evidence he has cited.

There has been renewed interest in the study of the Indian village community, a subject which had led to considerable controversy among British administrators and historians, political thinkers and others during the nineteenth century. The controversy had

[29]I.P. Gupta, 'Urban Life of Northern India during the Seventeenth Century', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 1950; K.H. Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India, 1556-1805* (Bombay, 1968) and *Urbanisation and Urban Centres Under the Great Mughals* (Simla, 1971); K.I. Gillion, *Ahmedabad: A Study in Indian Urban History* (California, 1968). See also B.G. Gokhale, 'Ahmedabad in the Seventeenth Century', *JESHO*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1969.

[30]See Surendra Gopal, 'Form of Textile Production in Gujarat in the Seventeenth Century', *Procs., IHC*, 1963; J. Irwin, 'Social Relations in the Textile Trade of the Seventeenth Century', *Indian Studies: Past and Present*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1960. Moreland's account in *India at the Death of Akbar* may be supplemented by his 'Some Sidelights on Life in Agra, 1637-39', *JUPHS*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1923.

[31]Chicherov, *Indian Economic Development*. He has also appended a useful list of Soviet writings on the social and economic history of medieval India. See also A. Rashid, 'Merchants and Artisans in Medieval North Indian Economy (1208-1526)', in B.P. Sinha, ed., *Dr. S. Mukherjee Felicitation Volume* (Varanasi, 1969). S.S. Kulshreshtha touches upon the problem, but adds hardly anything now in *The Development of Trade and Industry under the Great Mughals (1526-1707)* (Allahabad, 1964).

revolved around two main issues: first, who was the owner of the land—the state, the landlord, the village community or the peasant—and the concomitant consequences for policy formulation; and second, the wider question of the stages of the development of human society. At that time, comparative study of social structures was in its infancy. The discovery of a common origin of Sanskrit, Persian and Latin had raised the wider question of a common origin of man and of the stages and forms of his social development. The study of the Russian *mir* and of communal forms of ownership in the early Teutonic tribes led social philosophers to postulate that all human societies passed through analogous phases of development, and that the Indian village community represented one of these early phases. This aspect of the controversy has, however, become more and more sterile, though it continues to raise its head periodically, revolving around the question of oriental society or oriental despotism.

Since the close of the nineteenth century, sociologists have been conducting detailed studies on the structure and organisation of Indian village society. A considerable literature on the subject is available.[32] Studies have been conducted from the viewpoint of caste, family and kinship relationships, the relationship between agriculturists and artisans (the *jajmani* system), and the organisation of villages (nucleated, dispersed, linear, etc.). Some attempts have been made to study the impact of the process of modernisation on village society. However, the study of the wider question regarding the extent to which the structure of rural society inhibits the process of modernisation is of comparatively recent origin.

The comparative neglect by sociologists of the study of the wider social processes or of macro as distinct from micro-studies may, perhaps, be ascribed to two main causes. One was the strong British tradition, later reinforced by the American tradition, of

[32]This literature is too vast to be listed. For a useful bibliography, see John Adams and Uwe J. Woltemade, 'Studies of Indian Village Economies', *IESHR*, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1970. An interesting discussion regarding the extent to which rural artisans were dependent upon the village landlord or *jajman* may be seen in H. Fukazawa, 'Rural Servants in the Eighteenth Century Maharashtrian Village—Demiurgic or *Jajmani* System?', *HJE*, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1972. See also A.M. Shah, 'Historical Sociology: A Trend', in Srinivas, Rao and Shah, ed., *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology* (Bombay, 1974).

carefully conducted, detailed or microstudies. A second cause was the ahistorical approach in sociology, which was reinforced by the almost exclusive concern of the historians with political processes and their disdain towards the methodology of the sociologists emphasising micro-studies of social structures.

The broadening of the concept of history and growing interest in this country in the process of growth and development, forms of property in the villages and in rural administration have led a number of historians to study the forms and processes of village society during the medieval period, particularly the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—a period for which alone sufficient documentary material is available.

The use of this material for the study of village society in India is still in its infancy, as the bulk of it has not even been indexed as yet. Such studies as have been made are, therefore, largely of an impressionistic nature. Among these, reference may be made to the articles of B.R. Grover and Satish Chandra.[33] While the former argues that the concept of the village community as held by British administrators in the nineteenth century, was based on their confusing parcenary rights (*pattidari*) with the rights of the peasants as a whole, the latter has called attention to the privileged position of the *khud-kasht* peasants (owner cultivators) in the working of the village community, and the role and position of the *pahi-kasht* (vagrant cultivators or outsiders) who came to notice from the sixteenth century onwards. The need for studying the relationship between these two categories of peasants in the working and development of village society is obvious. The appearance of large numbers of *pahis* in a village or a region was indicative of a crisis, but this crisis could be and was often resolved by granting ownership (*khud-kasht*) rights on virgin land, which was brought under cultivation with the help of the state and classes having capital resources. Individuals who enjoyed political-cum-administrative authority in rural society, that is, the *zamindars* and *muqaddams* also played a definite role. This process was

[33]B.R. Grover, 'The Concept of Village Community in North India during the Mughal Age and the Pre-British Era', Seminar Paper, Institute of Advanced Study (mimeograph; Simla, 1966.) Satish Chandra, 'Some Aspects of the Indian Village Society in North India during the Eighteenth Century', *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974. This aspect has been touched upon in Ravinder Kumar, *Western India*; and A.V. Venkata Ratnam, *Local Government in the Vijayanagar Empire* (Mysore, 1972).

interrupted when the British tended to treat all categories of peasants apart from *zamindars*, as tenants, and when there was a relative shortage of virgin land available for cultivation. This resulted in a growing social as well as economic crisis during the nineteenth century. Detailed studies on this aspect have, however, yet to be made.

The second half of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century was the period when detailed studies of castes and tribes in different regions of India were carried out by a devoted band of sociologists, administrators and demographers. The works of Thurston, Enthoven, Ibbetson, Crooke, and others[34] on the subject are still regarded as classics. The census reports of the period also provide considerable information on the subject. By and large, however, historians of medieval India paid hardly any attention to the role of caste in the working of institutions, in economic developments, or in the growth of social, political and cultural movements. Nor did they pay much attention to the wider problem of social mobility in medieval India. At the back of this neglect was the tacit assumption that society during medieval India had been largely static. Hence, the problem of studying change in the structure of caste in society as a whole hardly arose.

In turn, the so called rigid, unchanging nature of medieval society in India was often ascribed to the Turkish conquest which, it was alleged, forced Hindu society, by a defence mechanism, to shut its doors to outside influences and to withdraw into itself. From this point of view, the Bhakti movement posed a number of inconvenient problems. If the Hindu society was rigid and unchanging, the strong egalitarian sentiments voiced by the Bhakti saints could be linked only to doctrinal issues, not to social change. This led to the further belief that neither the religious reform movements, nor the efforts of an Akbar shook Hindu society from its frozen immobility. Another explanation, popular with sociologists of the Weberian school was that fission was

[34]E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes in South India*, Vols. I-VII (Madras, 1909); R.E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vols. I-IV (Bombay, 1922); D. Ibbetson, *Castes and Tribes in Punjab* (Lahore, 1916); H.V. Nanjundayya and L.K. Iyer, *The Mysore Castes and Tribes* (Mysore, 1935); W. Crooke, *Tribes and Castes of the North West Provinces and Oudh* (Calcutta, 1896); E.A.H. Blunt, *The Caste System of Northern India*, (rpt. Delhi, 1969).

inherent in the very nature of the Hindu caste structure, and that it effectively guarded against development and vertical mobility. The British administrative historians tended to support this view due to ignorance as well as an acute realisation that it provided a readymade alibi for the neglect of social and economic development of India under British rule.

Attitudes began to change slowly after 1947. Leo Synder's book, *Caste Instability in Mughal India* (Seoul, n.d.), which came out in the fifties, was a pointer. However, Srinivas's theory of Sanskritisation aroused hardly any interest among historians, and little effort was made to test its validity in the light of historical evidence. Nor did sociologists consider such a study worthwhile. The linkage of *zamindari* rights with caste/clan formations underlined the necessity for a close study of the phenomenon of caste in its historical setting. However, it became apparent that in order to understand the structure and historical evolution of caste, it would be necessary to study it on a regional basis before an integrated picture of its functioning during the medieval period could be made.[35] R.S. Sharma's hypothesis[36] that the process of sub-division of castes developed in India during the period of feudalisation and growing localism, particularly after the seventh century, has not been taken up for detailed study by any medieval historian till now. However, B.P. Mazumdar[37] has argued that the rise of new castes such as Jot, Kagazi, Dhunia, Madaka, etc., in Bengal, Bihar and eastern Utter Pradesh was due to an entirely different process, that is, growth of new industries and new types of specialisation in textiles, paper, sugar, leather, etc. Detailed work of this type for various areas would be necessary before R.S. Sharma's thesis can be accepted, rejected or modified.

The study of the position of Sudras in ancient India has, so far, not been carried forward to the medieval or modern period.

[35]There is a good deal of scattered information on the subject, particularly in regional languages. The present author has collected some of it, but it is properly a separate study.

[36]*Social Changes in Early Medieval India, c. 500-1200* (New Delhi, 1969) and 'Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval Indian History', *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974. See also the perspective remarks of N. R. Ray, Presidential Address, *IHC*, 1967 and S.C. Mishra, Presidential Address, Medieval India section, *ibid.*

[37]'New Forms of Specialization in Industries of Eastern India in the Turko-Afghan Period', *Procs., IHC*, 1969.

Little detailed work has been done on the social background of the Rajputs, though their mixed origin is not seriously disputed.[38] Some recent writings show that vertical mobility in the *varna* structure was not absent in medieval India. The process can be seen at work, for instance, in the case of the Rajputs, Jats and Marathas. It would appear that political and economic power, including control over land, were important factors for a group rising in the *varna* scale. Loss of these not only led to a decline in social prestige but also relegation to a lower position in the *varna* hierarchy. Tribal groups often belonged to the latter category. Marathas, on the other hand, succeeded in establishing their claim to Kshatriya status following the establishment of a powerful Maratha state.[39] In the case of the Jats, only individual families succeeded in doing so. In this context, it has been noted that granting of *varna* status was not the privilege of Brahmins alone. In disputed cases, this was left to the ruler—a tradition which continued to the nineteenth century. Hence, the acceptance or recognition of the superior *varna* status of a ruler had a definite bearing on fixing the *varna* status of the clan/caste group associated with the ruler. The *khud-kasht/pahi-kasht* syndrome in village society[40] suggests that limited *varna* mobility was available to individual families by their migrating to another *zamindari* or helping to establish a new village in which, by virtue of their ownership of land, they could hope to enjoy a higher caste status. However, detailed studies of this aspect have yet to be made.

Little work has been done on the position of slaves and serfs in medieval India. That slavery was widespread and found both in the urban and rural sectors is well-known. Contemporaries speak of recurrent famines and of parents selling their children in order to avoid seeing them starved to death. What impact did these

[38]D.C. Sircar has noted that in the period before the Muslim invasions, the word Rajput had, apart from *rajaputra*, various meanings, including 'horse-soldier', 'trooper', 'headman of a village', 'subordinate chief', etc. In addition, he notes that individuals or groups with whom the word was associated are generally considered to be *varnasankara*, of mixed caste origin, and thus inferior in rank to Kshatriyas. See *Guhilas of Kishkindha* (Calcutta, 1965).

[39]See Satish Chandra, 'Social Background to the Rise of the Maratha Movement during the Seventeenth Century in India', *IESHR*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1973; S.C. Misra, 'Social Mobility in Pre-Mughal India', *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974.

[40]See Chapter IV for a review of *khud-kasht* and *pahi-kasht* rights.

recurring famines have on society, particularly on rural society? Who bought the children of starving peasants and how were they disposed of? What was the social background of armed *sadhus* who acted as professional soldiers and robbers by turns? What percentage of the rural society consisted of rural 'bond slaves'? Did they, as is suspected, come from the category of rural landless labourers or untouchables, the two often overlapping? All these questions have yet to be studied in detail. So far, little attempt has been made to go beyond what Moreland has said on the subject.[41]

A distinctive genre of socio-historical studies is the district or local histories, a fairly large number of which have been written. For instance, in the case of Bengal, we have in Bengali the histories of *Bebhar Ganga* (1895), *Murshidabad* (1902), *Bikrampur* (1909),[42] *Nadia* (1910, 1912), *Sylhet* (1910, 1917), *Dacca* (1912), *Khulna* (1914), *Pabna* (1923), *Hugli* (1929, 1948), *Birbhum* (1936), *Medinipur* (1939), *Faridpur*, etc.[43] Most of these seem to have been written between 1895 and 1948. These district histories throw ample light on the socio-economic conditions, particularly on the position of castes in the region. The institution of slavery is also touched upon in some of the accounts. The history of Calcutta and the role of the Bengali middle class, the part played by castes such as the Kayasthas in the growth of the city, and the social position of Indians and Europeans at various stages have been some of the subjects of interest. Literary and religious works have been drawn upon for presenting a picture of Bengali social life during the medieval period. These deal with not only dress, food, ornaments, fairs and festivals, etc., but also with castes and relationships between groups. *Bauls* and *Mangal kavyas* are supplemented by field studies dealing with local cults and gods and goddesses. An attempt has been made in a few works to link the cults with social formations, such as caste. In this context, the study of the social background of the rise of religious cults such as the *Nath Sampradaya*, Shaktism, Tantrism, etc., is of considerable interest. The study of Hindu-Muslim

[41]Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* and *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*.

[42]Sudhir Kumar Mitra, *Hugli Ziler Itihas Bang Samaj*, Calcutta, 1948; etc.

[43]Achyut Chaudhuri, *Sylhater Itibritta*, Vols. I-II (Calcutta, 1910-17).

relationship has also been attempted.[44]

Another aspect of medieval Indian society on which hardly any work has been done so far is the study of tribal societies and the processes of their interaction with Hinduism, Islam and other religions. That there has been a long process whereby Hinduism and other established religions tried to bring the tribals within their fold is now accepted. K.M. Panikkar[45] considered caste to be one of the specific methods whereby the tribals were integrated into Hindu society. N.K. Bose[46] has explained the processes of absorption which varied with the stage of the development of tribal society, the hold of the tribe on land, etc. Studies of *zamindari* also show that the precise nature of the rights of the *zamindars* in land varies according to the structure of society. Where a tribal chief was designated the raja or the *zamindar*, the communal rights of property vested in the entire tribe. Where, due to differentiation in landholdings within the tribe, a group of dominant families had emerged, they laid claim to the ownership of the tribal lands. It may be assumed that the process of absorption, in turn, would have had a bearing on the further social development of a particular tribe.

Tribes have also been affected by internal migrations, though little study has so far been made of this phenomenon. It is well-known that following loss of political power, bands of Rajput clans migrated to different parts of the country and, in some cases, set up independent principalities in tribal territories. What was the nature of the interaction of these sections with the local population? In some cases, as in the case of Bhils and Meenas of

[44]See, for instance, N. Basu, *Banger Jatiya Itihas* (Calcutta, 1900-14); B. Ghosh, *Paschim Banger Sanskriti* (Calcutta, 1957); K. Sen, *Banger Baul* (Calcutta, 1954). Books dealing with social manners, customs, institutions, etc., in a region are too many to be listed. Some of the better known or recent ones are K.M. Panikkar, *Malabar and the Turks* (Madras, 1929) and *Malabar and the Portuguese* (Bombay, 1929); A. Chatterji, *Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzeb (1656-1707)* (Calcutta, 1967); R.K. Chaudhary, *History of Bihar* (Patna, 1958) and 'Social Structure in Medieval Mithila', in R.S. Sharma and Vivekanand Jha, ed, *Indian Society: Historical Probings*; R.C. Majumdar, *Bangla Deser Itihas* (Calcutta, 1966); A.R. Kulkarni, *Maharashtra in the Age of Shivaji* (Poona, 1969); A.C. Mayer, *Land and Society in Malabar* (London, 1952).

[45]*A Survey of Indian History* (Bombay, 1947).

[46]Ed., *Peasant Life in India; A Study in Indian Unity and Diversity* (Calcutta, 1961).

Rajasthan, the tribes were dispossessed of land, and sank to the position of robbers or denizens of the forest. In other cases, only groups within the dispossessed tribes (for example, Rajgonds) retained a higher status. In still other cases, there seems to have been a process of integration. Absorption of local gods and the local priestly class into the Hindu pantheon and the Brahmin caste was apparently the outer symbol of this process. Obviously, medieval rulers were not oblivious of the necessity of winning over to their side powerful sections in the local community, and sometimes members of dominant families in a tribe were given a position in the imperial hierarchy, thus helping to raise their *varna* status.[47]

Conversions to Islam in medieval India has been a subject of considerable controversy and linked to state policies (forced conversions, particularly of prisoners of war, economic incentives, etc.) and to the personal example and propaganda of popular saints. Little work has so far been done to study the problem in the context of societal and caste structure. It has been postulated that conversion to Islam was more common among the lower castes in Hindu society. But why that should have happened more in the case of some lower castes such as weavers, washers, dyers, metal-workers, tailors, etc., but not in the case of many others, is a question which needs careful study. Regional variations are also important. For instance, it has been argued that in Punjab, where tribal forms remained strong, the conversion of a tribal leader would result in the conversion of the entire tribe. In East Bengal, the prevalence of Buddhism is supposed to provide an answer, the argument being that those lower castes which had little attachment to Hindu religion and, as a result, had changed their religion earlier, were prepared to do so again in order to raise their social status. In some other cases (for example, the Meos of Haryana/Rajasthan), only a section of the tribe converted to Islam so that till recent times it has remained divided between the two faiths. It is obvious that conversion was a complex phenomenon involving social, economic, political and cultural elements. Of these the social and economic aspects in

[47]Some recent historical writings include A. Guha, 'Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750', *IHR*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1974; K.S. Singh, 'A Study in State Formation among Tribal Communities,' in R.S. Sharma and Vivekanand Jha, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings*.

their regional variations[48] have, till now, received the least attention.

A word may be said here about the specific problem of the study of Muslim society. A number of books on the subject have recently been brought out by Indian and Pakistani scholars.[49] However, hardly any of these books deals with the specific features of Muslim society in the various regions. For many of them, the Muslims are a separate and distinctive group, with little or decreasing interaction with the majority community. Others emphasise the elements of cultural interaction, but continue to look upon the Muslims as forming a homogeneous group or community in the country. Regional studies based on a careful study of the position of different religious, ethnic and caste groups, and their relationship, may help in arriving at a better understanding of the nature, composition, structure and value system of the Muslims. For instance, the assumption that the Muslims in India are mainly urban in character has been challenged in a recent study, and it has been shown that a large majority of the Muslims in most of the states are, in fact, rural.[50] If this is the present position, how far back can it be worked out? What was the character and pattern of the settlement on land by the Muslims? Was it, again, on some kind of a clan/caste basis? If so, would it help in understanding the processes of conversion to Islam? These problems have yet to be tackled.

The position of women, family, marriage customs and ceremonies have been subjects of a number of books. In the Vidya

[48]For a recent study, see S.C. Misra, *Muslim Communities in Gujarat: A Preliminary Study* (Bombay, 1964). The subject of conversion occurs in almost all the recent works on Muslim society in India listed below.

[49]A. Karim, *Changing Society in India and Pakistan: A Study in Social Change and Social Stratification* (Dacca, 1956) and *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (down to A.D. 1538)* (Dacca, 1959); K.A. Nizami, *Studies in Medieval Indian History* (Aligarh, 1956); I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the India-Pakistan Sub-continent (610-1947)* (The Hague, 1962); S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Community in India* (Lahore, 1961; New York, 1969); Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford, 1964); M. Mujeeb, *Islamic Influence on Indian Society* (Delhi, 1972).

[50]Moonis Raza, A. Ahmad and N.A. Siddiqi, 'Muslims in India: Some Aspects of Regional Demography', in Zafar Imam, ed., *Muslims in India* (Delhi, 1975).

Bhavan series, an attempt has been made to link the deteriorating position of women in India to the Turkish invasions—growing insecurity, institutionalised forms such as seclusion (*purdah*) and large establishments of women (*harems*) maintained by the new ruling class,[51] etc. It is, however, well-known that North India was plagued with the problem of insecurity much before the arrival of the Turks, and that neither *purdah* nor *harems* were new to India. On the other hand, although Muslim women had better rights to property as well as to divorce under certain conditions, these were not extended to upper caste Hindu women during the medieval period as a result of the Turkish impact. Little attempt has been made to analyse the social factors which apparently led to an increase in the disabilities suffered by upper class Hindu women during the period, but which precluded the acceptance of some of the positive features mentioned above. Nor has much work been done on the family as an institution, the evolution of various types of joint families prevalent in different parts of the country, the significance of relationships and patterns of devolution of property, their impact on demographic trends, etc. One reason for this has been the slow development of demographic studies, the lack of familiarity of Indian historians with and their reluctance to use recent demographic data as a legitimate basis for retrodiction for purposes of studying medieval social patterns and structures.[52]

Questions regarding the value structure of a society, how it is framed, transmitted and reoriented, are not easy to answer. Most of the writings on political, administrative and cultural history have conscious or unconscious presuppositions on the subject. Some of the questions which have been raised relate to the attitude of the medieval rulers towards their subjects or certain sections of them, of the subjects towards the rulers and sections of the ruling class, the urban-rural dichotomy, the role of popular

[51]U.N. Ghoshal, 'Social Life', in *Delhi Sultanate* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 574-606.

[52]Apart from Kingsley Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan* (Princeton, 1951), see Ashok V. Desai, 'Population and Standards of Living in Akbar's Time', *IESHR*, Vol. IX, No. 1, 1972; Shireen Moosvi, 'Production Consumption and Population in Akbar's Time', *IESHR*, Vol. X, No. 2, 1973; Morris D. Morris, 'The Population of All-India, 1800-1951', *IESHR*, Vol. XI, Nos. 2 and 3, 1974.

saints in value formation in medieval times and the tension between them and the representatives of established religions, the role of *zamindars* and other groups holding superior land rights in the value structure of village society, etc. T.C. Das Gupta and Tapan Raychaudhuri[53] have shown the value of the study of religious literature for finding answers to some of these. A detailed study of literature for this purpose has hardly begun, though a few useful studies have appeared.[54]

Education has received some attention in recent years. It has been shown that both state and private beneficence were used for primary and higher education, but organised education was the virtual monopoly of the religious classes. As such, it was naturally oriented towards religious studies, though the liberal arts, particularly literature, were not neglected.[55] In this situation, the efforts of an Akbar to emphasise secular education were bound to fail. Vocational education was largely a family affair, though instruction was sometimes provided in royal *karkhanas*. Thus, it would appear that like every organised society, medieval Indian society had its own ways and means for passing on to the next generation the experience and values it considered important. It is the communications network rather than education in the narrow, formal sense which has evoked considerable interest in recent years. The question is: how were values transmitted to a largely illiterate population? What role did itinerant saints, traders, periodic festivals or fairs play in this? What was the mechanism by which ideas passed from one part of the country to another in a comparatively short period?

The second question which arises is: were the received values relevant to the growth and well-being of medieval Indian society?

[53]T.C.Das Gupta, *Aspects of Bengal Society from Old Bengali Literature* (Calcutta, 1935); Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jehangir* (Calcutta, 1953).

[54]See, for instance, Irfan Habib, 'Evidence for Sixteenth Century Agrarian Conditions in the Guru Granth Sahib', *IESHR*, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1967; J.S. Grewal, *Guru Nanak in History* (Chandigarh, 1969); Savitri Chandra, 'Indian Social Concepts in the Latter Half of the Sixteenth Century, Based on Literary Sources', *Diogenes*, No. 87 (Paris, 1974); Qamar Uddin, 'Amir Khusrau and His Pandnama: Lessons in Socio-Political Morality', *IESHR*, Vol. IX, No. 4, 1972.

[55]Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture* (London, 1959); Aziz Ahmad, *Intellectual History of Islam in India* (Edinburgh, 1969).

For instance, why did the cultivation of the secular sciences and of technology not receive sufficient importance in medieval India?[56] To what extent is this relatable to the specific situation within the country, such as surplus human labour, which was readily available? Or did it reflect the values of the upper classes?

Finally, we come to the role of religion in medieval society. The question of conversions has been already discussed. The study of the medieval Bhakti movement has been carried out from many points of view—whether it was essentially indigenous or the result of extraneous influences such as Islam; Christianity and its specific ethico-religious value structure; its philosophical and ontological basis; its different intellectual strands and their role in cultural synthesis or in reorganising the old faith so as to meet the new challenges such as that posed by Islam. The classic works in this field are those of Tara Chand, Barthwal, Nicholson, Arberry, Sen, De, etc.[57] In some recent studies, an attempt has been made to link the rise of the Bhakti movement with the viewpoint of the artisans, whose growth is linked with centralisation in this period which, it is argued, in turn led to the growth of towns and money economy.[58] The rise of Sikhism

[56]There has been considerable interest in the subject recently. See M.A. Alvi and A. Rahman, *Fathullah Shirazi, A Sixteenth Century Indian Scientist* (New Delhi, 1968); I. Habib, 'Technological Change and Society (Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries)', *Procs. IHC*, 1969 and 'Technology and Economy in Mughal India', Delhi, 1970, mimeograph; Surendra Gopal, 'Social Set-up of Science and Technology in Mughal India', *Indian Journal of History of Science*, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-2, 1969; Morris D. Morris, 'Values as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in South Asia', *JEH*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4; Lynn White, 'Tibet, India and Malaya as Sources of Western Technology', *American History Review*, Vol. XLV, No. 3, 1960.

[57]Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad, 1946); K. Sen, *Medieval Mysticism in India* (London, 1930); S.K. De, *The Early History of Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1961); R.A. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam* (London, 1914; 2nd edn., 1961) and *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1921); A.J. Arberry, *The Doctrine of the Sufis* (Cambridge, 1935) and *Sufism* (London, 1950); P. Barthwal, *Hindi Sahitya men Nirguna Sampradaya* (*v.s.* 2007); R.C. Zaehnar, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960).

[58]W.C. Smith, 'Lower Class Uprising in the Mughal Empire', *Islamic Culture*, 1946; M. Habib, *Politics and Society During the Early Medieval Period*, Vol. I (New Delhi, 1974).

has been linked with the low-caste artisans and the Jat peasantry on the one hand, and the *zamindars* on the other.[59]

A great deal has been written on the Vaishnavite movement and specifically on Chaitanya. Unlike the radical, non-conformist movements led by Kabir, Dadu and others, the position of the Vaishnavite movement and of Chaitanya specifically is somewhat nebulous. The Vaishnavite movement itself was not a unified movement, but contained within it elements of protest and dissent as well as of conformism to traditional values and concepts. The Krishnite movement is generally considered to be non-conformist in its attitude, and Chaitanya is a leading representative of this trend. Why, then, did the Vaishnavite movement remain largely confined within the framework of orthodox Hinduism? No satisfactory answer to this is forthcoming, though one theory is that after the death of Chaitanya, the Vaishnavite *swamis* were able to capture the movement and mould it to suit their convenience, while, at the same time, using it as a means of proselytising the tribals of north-eastern India, who were willing to identify themselves with and accept the dark-skinned god Krishna and his pattern of a freer sex-life.[60] However, in the absence of a fuller analysis of the social basis of the Krishnite movement and its growth such hypotheses remain only useful conjectures.

Many books have been written on Muslim religious movements in medieval India. Although Ashraf was among the earliest to present a penetrating analysis of the social basis of the Muslim clergy in India and its social and political role, recent studies have not materially altered his broad conclusion that despite a number of serious limitations, the clergy on the whole played a positive role during the Sultanat period. No comparative study has been done for the Mughal period. Whether the movement led by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was basically a movement of social reform among the Muslims, or a reaction to the liberal policies of Akbar is still a matter of considerable controversy among scholars. In a recent study, it has been suggested that the

[59]N. Ray, *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Society* (Patiala, 1970); I.B. Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, Vol. II (Calcutta, 1947); Ganda Singh, *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur* (Amritsar, 1935).

[60]This is implied in Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jehangir.*

orthodox measures advocated by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi became popular among the Muslims only during the eighteenth century, that is, during the period of the decline of the Mughal empire and the crisis of the Muslim upper classes which accompanied and followed it.[61] However, this is only a partial answer to the question why Muslim orthodoxy and militant Hinduism make their appearance almost simultaneously during the second half of the seventeenth century. Did they have a common social base? Specifically, was it a reflection of the growing crisis of the ruling classes and the classes dependent upon them, as has been suggested by Satish Chandra and by Athar Ali? Or was it due to the growing discontent of the artisans and the peasantry, as seems to be implied by Irfan Habib? A better understanding of these problems could, perhaps, be gained by a deeper study of contemporary literary and religious works.

The role of the Sufi saints in legitimising conversions has already been touched upon. Their role in smoothing over some of the conflicts affecting Muslim society during the Sultanat period has been underlined by many writers, notably M. Habib and K.A. Nizami.[62] By the end of the fifteenth century, the philosophy of love and toleration propounded by the Sufi and Bhakti saints had become common parlance among the upper classes and was echoed by many literary writers.[63] This was a cause for serious concern to some sections of orthodox clergymen. Both liberal-dissenting and orthodox-revivalist movements ran side by side in India during the sixteenth, seventeenth and subsequent centuries, although during specific phases one or the other appeared to be the dominant trend largely due to the royal attitude. A fuller understanding of the persistence of both these trends requires a deeper analysis of the structure, interrelationship, value structure, urges and motivations, hopes and fears of various segments of society in their spatial as well as segmented dimensions towards which the social historians of medieval India have to move.

[61]S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Agra, 1965).

[62]M. Habib, *Politics and Society*; K.A. Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century* (New Delhi, 1961) and *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Aligarh, 1955).

[63]See, for instance, S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement*.

VIII

The Maratha Polity: Its Nature and Development

By the time the East India Company established its rule in India, the administrative and political system established in the country by the Mughals had largely broken down. The centralising Mughal Empire had given place to a series of states held together in a system of balance of power. The Marathas were politically the most powerful and aggressive entity among this group of states. However, by 1761 their bid to replace the Mughal Empire by a new, all-India empire had definitely failed. While scholars are by no means agreed on the significance and causes of the Maratha defeat at Panipat, there is hardly any difference of opinion that institutional defects played a large part in the ultimate failure of the Marathas. Generally speaking, these are traced to the abandonment of Shivaji's administrative system and its gradual replacement by an essentially feudal polity presided over by the Peshwas.[1] This emphasises the necessity of examining the nature of the Maratha movement and polity, the ideas underlying them and their impact upon the agrarian situation. Unless and until that is done, our understanding of the nature of the forces at work in medieval Indian society in general and

Published in *Ideas in History*, ed., Bisheshwar Prasad (Bombay, 1969), pp. 173-93.

[1]See V.V. Joshi, *Clash of Three Empires* (Allahabad, 1941); G.S. Sardesai, *New History of the Maratha People*, Vol. I (Poona, 1948), pp. 353-4. The number of ministers varied from seven to twenty according to the ancient thinkers. The *Mahabharata* recommended eight ministers. See Altekar, *State and Government in Ancient India* (Benares, 1949), p. 165.

during the eighteenth century in particular must remain incomplete.

There has been a good deal of discussion among historians whether the Maratha movement was a Hindu reaction against the communal policies of Aurangzeb,[2] or a movement of national independence against foreign rule,[3] or simply a regional reaction against the inexorable process of absorption into the Mughal Empire.[4] Since, in the medieval context, all movements of protest tended to express themselves in religious forms, or to draw their sustenance from religious ideologies, the task of analysing their social and economic content is not easy. It is outside the scope of the present paper to enter into a detailed examination of the nature of the Maratha movement. Historically, the rise of the Maratha movement was anterior to the communal policies of Aurangzeb and cannot be explained in terms of the so-called religious reaction alone. Even a casual examination of the composition of the Maratha ruling class would show that it retained its regional character to the end. Hardly any non-Maratha rose to a position of importance in the Maratha states during the eighteenth century.

We may distinguish three broad phases in the development of the Maratha polity: the early phase lasting up to the flight of Raja Ram to Jinji (1689); the stage of expansion lasting more or less up to the battle of Panipat (1761); and the final phase up to the final defeat of the Marathas by the British in 1818, and the establishment of British paramountcy.

It is unfortunate that we have hardly any documentary material or letters which might help us to understand the actual administrative ideals and practices of Shivaji. Neither the European sources nor the Persian accounts throw much light on them. The Maratha sources available to us mostly relate to the late

[2]J.N. Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times* (4th edn., Calcutta, 1948), p. 372; G.S. Sardesai, *Main Currents of Maratha History* (2nd edn., Bombay, 1949), pp. 57-83.

[3]M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power and Other Essays* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 3-4, 48. 'The idea of forming a confederacy of Hindu powers all over India, and subverting Musulman dominion, appears never to have seriously been entertained by him.'

[4]This view was expressed by Dr R.P. Tripathi, though I am not aware if he has put it down in print.

seventeenth or early eighteenth century when a religious halo was already being cast on Shivaji. For example, Sabhasad, writing at Jinji in 1697, declares that Shivaji was an incarnation of Mahadeva, and ascribes his victories over Afzal Khan and Shaista Khan to the advice and miraculous power of the Goddess Bhawani.[5] Shivaji was well versed in the epics and the Hindu scriptures. In so far as he had a conscious ideology, it was apparently derived from them. However, the scriptures did not provide a sufficient guide for the organisation of the state, and Shivaji was compelled in practice to draw upon the existing ideas and institutions both of the Deccanis and the Mughals. The administrative ideas and ideals of Shivaji have thus to be largely deduced from his practice.

Recent research has shown that Shivaji's system of administration was based essentially on the system of administration prevalent in the Deccan but it also drew upon the Mughal institutions. Most of the important officials comprising the *asthapradhan*, such as the *peshwa*, the *majmuadar*, the *dabir*, etc., had existed in the Deccan much before Shivaji's time.[6] The administrative divisions adopted by Shivaji—the *suba* or *prant*, *tarf* and *mauza*—were also based on the administrative divisions prevalent in the Deccan.[7] Under the Sultans in the Deccan, the

[5]*Sabhasad Bakkhar*, or *Shiv Chhatrapatichen Charitra*, ed., K.N. Sane (Bombay, 1923), pp. 11, 23, 32, *et, seq.*; S.N. Sen, *Shiva Chatrapati* (Calcutta, 1920), pp. 11, 27, 42. 'This deed (the killing of Afzal Khan) was not that of a human being. An incarnation he surely was, and so indeed he could perform this deed' (*Sabhasad Bakkhar*, p. 22; *Shiva Chhatrapati*, p. 25).

[6]Sir Wolsey Haig thinks that the body of eight ministers was instituted by Muhammad Shah Bahamani I, with modifications about their numbers and functions being introduced according to the needs and resources of individual kings. See *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III (Cambridge. 1937, p. 377). See also V.T. Gune, *The Judicial System of the Marathas*, (Poona, 1953), pp. 26-7; H.N. Sinha, *Development of Indian Polity* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 379-80. 'There is some propriety in discovering more than a superficial resemblance in numbers, between the Bahamani ministry and Shivaji's ministry.'

[7]S.N. Sen, *Administrative System of the Marathas* (2nd edn., Calcutta, 1925), pp. 44, 252; V.T., Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 28. However, Sen is not correct in equating these divisions to the *subah*, *sarkar* and *pargana* of the Mughals. Nor is it easy to see how the adoption of Sanskrit nomenclatures

traditional elements enjoying local authority, the *deshmukhs*, *desais*, etc., were not displaced. For the maintenance of the officials and their dependents, *iqtas*[8] were assigned. These were often held on revenue-farming terms. Towards the beginning of the century, Methwold records at Golconda that 'the government is farmed immediately from the King by some eminent man, who to other inferiours farmeth out the lesser ones, and they again to the country people.'[9] These farmers could be the local officials or *jagirdars* but were quite often Hindus—usually brahmins or baniyas.[10] The revenue farmers apparently enjoyed considerable administrative powers in the tracts under their charge.[11] Though not hereditary in theory, they tended to become so, particularly in the outlying areas, where the authority of the Sultan was slack.

It has been argued by almost every historian since Ranade's time that Shivaji abolished feudalism in his dominions. Sen says that he 'made it a rule not to assign any *jagir* to any officers, civil or military'.[12] Also, that while for reasons of expediency, Shivaji left the *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes* in the enjoyment of their old rights and perquisites, he appointed government agents to collect the land revenue and thus established direct relations with the peasants. Finally, we are told that Shivaji did not disturb the 'village republics' which were left in enjoyment of their former rights and privileges and formed the basis of Shivaji's administration.[13]

The assertion that Shivaji did not assign any *jagirs* to his

for these by Shivaji was proof of 'nationalising principles'. The *subahs* of Shivaji apparently corresponded to the *parganas* or *mamlats* of the Deccani rulers.

[8]*Iqta* had gradually come to mean revenue assignments in which the state has the real rights of property. See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 257 n. The assignee was called *muqta*, and frequently held the lands on revenue-farming terms. (See Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, pp. 487-8.) The *muqta* often enjoyed wide administrative powers.

[9]Methwold, *Relations*, ed., W.H. Moreland in *Relations of Golconda*, Hakluyt 2nd series, No. LXVI (London, 1931), p. 11.

[10]*Relations*, pp. 54, 57, 79, 81-2.

[11]See Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, pp. 31-3.

[12]Sen, *Administrative System*, p. 45. See also Ranade, *Rise of Maratha Power*, pp. 70, 78; Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. III, p. 56; Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 351; Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 30.

[13]Sen, *Administrative System*, p. 30.

officers seems to be based on a single passage in Sabhasad's account. Referring to the mode of payment to the chief officials, Sabhasad says:

> The *sarnobat*, and the *majmuadar*, and the *karkuns*, and the men on the personal staff of the raja, were given their salary *tankhwa* by means of *barats* (orders). The lands cultivated by them were subject to assessment like the fields of the *rayats*, and the amount of the revenue due was deducted from their pay. For the balance they got *barats* either on the treasury of the capital or the district. Men serving in the cavalry, the army or the forts were not to be given villages in entirety (*dar-o-bast*) as *mokasa mahals*. They were to be paid by *barats* from the treasury. None but the *karkuns* had any authority over the countryside. All payments to the cavalry, the army or the fort establishments were to be made by the *karkuns*. The grant of *mokasa* would have created disorder among the *rayat*: they would have grown in strength and disobeyed the government collectors; and the growing power of the *rayats* would have led to rebellion at various places. The *mokasa* holders and the *zamindars*, if united, would have become uncontrollable. Therefore no *mokasa* was to be granted to anyone.[14]

Diverse interpretations have been put upon the words *mokasa* and *mokasa mahals*. *Mokasa* has been defined as a proprietory right in land, whether rent-free, or at low quit rent or on revenue-farming terms on condition of service.[15] However the most satisfactory explanation seems to be to derive it from the Persian word *muqasama* (v.n. of *qism*) meaning 'dividing (with another), admitting (him) to a share'.[16] It has thus the same meaning as the Arabic word *iqta* which appears to have been more generally

[14] *Sabhasad*, pp. 27-8.

[15] Wilson, *Glossary*, pp. 352-3; Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 351; Sen, *Administrative System*, p. 669; Gune, *Judicial System*, Vol. XXV, pp. 12-13. Wilson says that *mokasa* is irregularly derived from the Arabic *khas* and also includes under *mokasa* 'a village held *khas* by the state...or the share of the government in a village or the revenue paid by it'. However, the word has clearly not been used in this sense by Sabhasad. There seems no justification for thinking that the world *mokasa* had come into use during the early period of the Bahmani kingdom. The actual word used in the *Burhan-i-Maasir* is *maqazat* or posts of *qazis*. Cf. Gune, *Judicial System*, p.13 n, quoting King, *Burhan-i-Maasir*, p.7.

[16] Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*.

used during the Sultanat and the Bahmanid periods.[17] It seems that there were three types of *muqasa* tenures under the Adil Shahi rulers. First, those in which was assigned 'a specified share (*taqsim*, an annual amount ranging from 200 *hons* to 600 *hons* or Rs 800 to Rs 2400) of the land revenue from a village to the royal cavalry-men such as *sillahdars*, *lashkari-afrad* and *lashkari* in lieu of their monthly salary (*mushahera*)'. Second, those granted on condition of service, consisting of one or more villages. These were apparently granted on revenue-farming terms, the exact revenue to be realised not being specified in the grant, and the grantee being free to administer them either through the hereditary local officers of the village, the *deshmukh*, through an agent, or *deshpande*, *patil*, etc. The third type of grants were those granted to high grandees, etc., as a royal favour, without their being connected with any office. These often consisted of a large number of villages, or one or more *parganas*. These were also held on revenue-farming terms, and the grantee was expected to maintain a specified force of cavalry from hundreds to some thousands for the service of the state. The word *jagir* seems sometimes to have been used for this category of grants, and such *jagirdars* virtually enjoyed the position of autonomous chiefs.[18]

None of the three categories mentioned above were hereditary. But there was, from the beginning, a marked tendency for heredity in the category of grants called *jagir* which were generally granted in frontier tracts or outlying areas. For example, there was from the outset no question of transfer as far as the *jagirs* of Shahji in the Poona and Bangalore tracts were concerned, and in the Qutb Shahi kingdom, as far as the *jagirs* of Mir Jumla in the Karnatak were concerned.

From the conjunction of the word *mahal* with *mokasa*, it appears that what Sabhasad was referring to was apparently the second type of grants referred to above, i.e., those involving overlordships or administrative rights in the tracts concerned, and held generally on revenue-farming terms. The objections to this type of grants, according to Sabhasad, were both economic

[17]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, ff. 257-8n.

[18]H. Fukazawa, 'A Study of the Local Administration of the Adil Shahi Sultanate'.

and political, viz., that they led to the oppression of the peasantry, and created the danger of the grantees joining hands with the local *zamindars* in opposing the government.

However, Sabhasad's statement that no *mokasa* was to be granted to anyone can only be taken as an enunciation of a broad ideal rather than a description of the actual practice under Shivaji. This is evident from the fact that Sabhasad refers to the grant of *mokasa mahals* by Shivaji on more than one occasion. Thus, after the defeat of Afzal Khan, many people were 'rewarded with grants of villages in *mokasa*' and *mokasa mahals* were also set apart for the Goddess Tulja Bhawani.[19] After the return of Shivaji from Agra, Krishnaji Pant, Kashi Rao and Vishaji Pant were rewarded by the grant of one lakh *huns* as *inam*, a salary of 10,000 *huns*, and the grant of *mokasa mahals*.[20] After the Karnatak expedition, when an agreement was patched up with Santaji, the son of Shahji by a concubine, he was given the command of 1000 horses in the Karnatak, and granted *mokasa mahals*.[21]

As far as the payment of cash salaries to the soldiers is concerned, that too, was apparently an ideal. The salaries of the soldiers, *havaldars*, etc., were either to be paid out of the treasury or by means of *barats* (orders) on the countryside which were to be paid by the *karkuns*. But the earlier practice of giving assignments of the villages for a fixed sum of money which was realised by the grantee either through his agent or the local *zamindars* was apparently not completely abandoned. To quote Sabhasad again, '*saranjam* should be given to soldiers who worked hard in campaigns.'[22]

[19] *Sabhasad*, pp. 21, 23.

[20] *Sabhasad*, p. 55.

[21] *Sabhasad*, p. 91.

[22] *Sabhasad*, p. 27. *Saranjam* has been defined as 'a temporary assignment of revenue from villages or lands for the support of troops or for personal military service, usually for the life of the grantee...these were neither transferable nor hereditary, and were held at the pleasure of the sovereign.' See Wilson, *Glossary*, 465. *Saranjam* comes nearest to the Mughal concept of a *jagir*, and is apparently used in this sense by Sabhasad. Thus, Shivaji's negotiations with Aurangzeb during his visit to Agra for a *saranjam* for himself are referred to more than once (*Sabhasad*, pp. 45, 49). Since Shivaji expected to get an imperial *mansab*, *saranjam* is obviously used in

The three types of *muqasa* grants under Adil Shahi rulers mentioned above thus appear in Shivaji's time in the shape of *saranjam*, *mokasa* and *jagir*. Strictly speaking, *jagir* as understood by the Mughals corresponded to neither of these, and Sabhasad uses both the words *mokasa mahals* and *saranjam* for Mughal *jagirs*. An important point to note is that all the three types of grants appear to have developed strong elements of heredity at a very early stage. The author of the *Ajnapatra*, writing in the early part of the eighteenth century, strongly disapproves of the system of hereditary assignments (*vritti*) out of land revenue, on the ground that it led to a continuous decline of the government's income, resulted in the oppression of the peasantry, and provided the disloyal descendents of an assignee the wherewithal for rebellion. However, he goes on to say, 'It is a sin to resume a hereditary preferment (*vritti*) however small it may be. The preferment of one person should not be transferred to another, nor should it be resumed.'[23] It is difficult to say to what extent such ideas were prevalent in Shivaji's time. Perhaps they were inherited from a much earlier period, and represented the powerful effect of Hindu tradition.

The fact that lands assigned for a religious purpose, viz., the maintenance of the temple of the goddess Tulja Bhawani, were also called *mokasa mahals* suggests that the lands so assigned

the sense of a *tankhwah jagir* here. As argued above, in the Deccan, *jagir* had come to imply a hereditary grant. Thus, Afzal Khan, in his negotiations with Shivaji, offered him 'the raj of Talkonkan *jahangiri* (i.e., his traditional *jagir*), and as much *saranjam* as he wanted' (*Sabhasad*, p. 10). In course of time *saranjam* also seems to have become hereditary.

The word *daulat*, often translated as *jagir* by modern writers, meant in reality a preferment, and could be used for any kind of an assignment—*jagir*, *mokasa* or *saranjam* or for a post or *mansab*. Sabhasad tells us that after the escape of Shivaji from Agra, Aurangzeb advised Shah Alam to appease Shivaji by giving territory (*muluk*) in *mokasa* in the name of his son. Shah Alam accordingly sent Shivaji a message promising him *mokasa*, 7000 *daulat* (i.e., *mansab*) to Sambhaji, and territory (*muluk*) yielding 15 lakh *huns* in Berar and Khandesh. Accordingly, Shah Alam gave *jagir* worth 15 lakh *huns* in Berar, and Rauji Somnath was appointed (by Shivaji) as its *sarsubadar* (*Sabhasad*, pp. 58-9).

[23]Ramchandra Pant, *Ajnapatra*, ed., K.N. Sane (Bombay, 1929); *Prakarana* 7.

were not normally transferred, and that there was an element of hereditary grant in them already.

The position regarding the mode of payment of officials, *havaldars*, and men of the armed forces might be summarised as follows:

(i) Shivaji desired to assert the authority of the government over the entire territory under his control. The practice of granting *mokasa mahals* was objected to since these grants which were held on revenue-farming terms conferred on the grantees administrative authority and the opportunity of harassing the peasantry, and created the danger of their joining hands with the local *zamindars* to oppose the government.

(ii) However, *mokasa mahals* continued to be granted, for religious purposes as well as for distinguished service.

(iii) It appears that many of the officials of Shivaji belonged to petty land-owning sections (*mirasdars*). Their lands were assessed like the lands of ordinary peasants, and the revenue due from them set off against their salary. Thus the number of officials who received their salaries wholly in cash was probably not very large.

(iv) Soldiers, *havaldars* and others were paid both in cash and by *saranjam*, i.e., the grant of stipulated sums of money out of the revenue of a village.

(v) The tradition of regarding all rights in land as essentially hereditary operated strongly from the beginning. However, this tradition was countered by the Muslim tradition that hereditary rights in land should vest in the king alone. In the tussle over this point, the weakness of the Maratha monarch after Shivaji operated powerfully to his disadvantage.

As far as Shivaji's policy towards the *zamindars* is concerned, in a long, rambling and somewhat obscure passage, Sabhasad makes the following points:

1. In the Adil Shahi, Nizam Shahi and Mughal territories conquered by Shivaji, 'the *rayats* had formerly been subject to *patils*, *kulkarnis* and *deshmukhs* who used to do the

collection work (*kamavisi*) and pay what they pleased (to the state).'

2. 'For a village where in *mirasdari* rights they took one or two thousand (*huns* or rupees) (they) used to pay two or three hundred to the government (*diwani*) as a contribution (*khand*). In consequence, the *mirasdars* grew wealthy, and strengthened themselves by building bastions, castles (*vade*) and strongholds in the village, and enlisting footmen and musketeers. They never waited on the revenue officer of the government, and resorted to fighting if he urged that they could pay more. This class had become unruly and seized the country.'

   Shivaji occupied their lands, demolished their bastions, castles and strongholds, and wherever there were strong forts, posted his own garrison. 'Thus no power was left in the hands of the *mirasdar*.'
3. He prohibited 'all that the *mirasdars* used to take at their sweet will, as gifts (*inam*) or by way of revenue farming (*ijara*), and fixed the dues of the *zamindars* from the villages in cash and grains as well as the rights and perquisites of the *deshmukhs* and the *deshkulkarnis*, and the *patil* (and) the *kulkarni*.'[24]

It does not seem correct to equate the *mirasdar* with the bigger *zamindars*, i.e., the *deshmukhs* and *desais*. Baden Powell defines it in the sense of a hereditary tenure, or for 'members of co-sharing landlord communities',[25] analogous to the *pattidari* or *bhaichara* villages of the north.[26] Reference to strongholds in

[24]Sen adds the words 'according to the yield of the village'. Sarkar says 'Their dues were fixed after calculating the (exact) revenue of the village.' However, such an interpretation does not follow from the original passage. Cf. *Sabhasad*, p. 30.

[25]Baden Powell, *Land System, Vol III*, pp. 115, 256-7. Wilson defines *mirasdar* as 'the holder of hereditary lands, or offices in a village...a petty land owner or cultivator' (p. 342). V. T. Gune, *Judicial System*, says 'The village communities were constituted by cultivators (*mirasdars* and *uparis*) and artisans (*balatas*)' (p. 4). Elsewhere, he defines *mirasdars* as 'free land owners' (pp. 5, 17).

[26]For definition of *mirasdar*, see Chapter IV. The *mirasdars* were cultivators who owned their lands, and had their own ploughs and bullocks. Sabhasad uses the word in a generic sense, including all those who had hereditary rights in land, i.e., all catagories of *zamindars*. (S.C.)

the villages suggests the latter, and recalls to mind the equally drastic action which the young Farid (Sher Shah) took in Bihar against fortified villages.[27] The *mirasdars* apparently held their lands on a quit-rent basis. Shivaji curtailed the privileges of the *mirasdars*, assessing them in the same way as ordinary peasants, and resuming the lands they had seized illegally. Thus he brought them nearer to the position of ordinary peasants.[28] It would follow that Shivaji interfered drastically with the privileges of the 'village republics' in some cases. Nevertheless, it would probably be correct to say that the petty *zamindars* (*mirasdars*) formed the backbone of Shivaji's support and constituted a powerful element in his armed forces as well as the civil administration.

The rule forbidding the building of castles was applied to the bigger *zamindars*, i.e., the *deshmukhs* and the *desais*. Shivaji's relations with this section were not always cordial. The more important of the *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes*, who had been left in enjoyment of their privileges by the Adil Shahi government, saw no reason to submit tamely to Shivaji. Hence many of them had to be fought by Shivaji. Many preferred to take service with the Adil Shahi or the Mughal Government.[29] Shivaji was thus faced with the problem of creating a new, dependable class of *zamindars*.

It seems that the most important step taken by Shivaji in this direction was to restrict and define the rights and perquisites of the primary and higher echelons of *zamindars*. It is not quite clear if Shivaji ended the system of revenue farming, or letting land to the *zamindars* on the basis of a quit-rent or tribute as is generally believed. But the government's agents apparently took steps to ascertain the actual produce. This later formed the basis of a new assessment. The steps appeared sufficiently important to Sabhasad to assert that 'the *rayats* were not subject to the autho-

[27] Abbas Khan Sarwani, *Tuhfa-i-Akbar Shahi*, quoted by Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 166.

[28] Cf. the action of Alauddin Khalji against the *khuts* and *balahars* of the *duab*. Barani, *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, pp. 287-91.

[29] For the list of Maratha nobles in Mughal service, see M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility*. They were much more numerous than Ranade, in *Rise of Maratha Power* (p. 38), believed.

rity of the *zamindars*, *deshmukhs* and *desais*, who had no rights to exercise the powers of a political superior (overlord), or to harass the *rayats*.'[30]

The ascertaining of the produce also implied the fixation of the perquisites and privileges of the *zamindars*. But the assumption that the land revenue was to be realised directly through the government's agents does not seem to be warranted. Sabhasad asserts that the *karkuns* were asked to realise rent in grains at the time of each harvest 'in every village, from each individual *rayat*'. It may well be that once again Sabhasad is stating only an ideal position, or a position that applied to *khalisa* lands only. It also appears that the word *rayat* is used both in the sense of the peasantry, and the owners of land, i.e., the village *zamindars*.[31]

From the foregoing analysis, it would appear that Shivaji made no drastic changes in the existing social set-up in Maharashtra. Even then, Shivaji's revenue policy would seem to mark a considerable advance. The sum total, in terms of its social effects, would be to reduce the *mirasdar* to the level of an ordinary farmer, and a *peshkashi zamindar* to the position of a *khiraji* one, i.e., instead of being largely autonomous, he was to be subject to the government's revenue rules and regulations, and obey its revenue collectors.[32]

It may be doubted whether Shivaji was able to apply the above policy to all the territories comprised in his *swarajya*. Sabhasad seems to imply that it applied only to the *desh* or tableland conquered from Bijapur, Golconda and the Mughals. In any case, it apparently did not apply to the scattered districts or the south Maratha country.[33]

[30] *Sabhasad*, p. 29.

[31] *Sabhasad's* statement that the grant of *mokasa mahals* led to the oppression of the *rayat*, that they would have disobeyed the government's agents, and that the growing power of the *rayat* would have led to rebellions, only makes sense if the word *rayat* is construed in the generic sense of the peasantry at one place, and the specific sense of village *zamindars* at the other. The word *raiyat* was apparently used in both these senses in Mughal literature also. See article of S. Nurul Hasan in *Procs. IHC*, XXVI Session, pp. 102-70.

[32] For a division of *zamindars* into *peshkashi* and *khiraji*, see *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, suppl. Ch. VI.

[33] For the system of administration in those areas, see V.T. Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 28. The Maratha *jagirdars* of the area retained their

The basically feudal character of the Maratha polity under Shivaji was reinforced by the fact that except for the coastal areas, trade and handicrafts were little developed in Shivaji's territories. Trade and income from trade, formed a very small part of his revenues. The Mughal emperors, and their leading nobles were fairly conscious of the possible monetary benefits, both to the state and to themselves individually which trade and the traders could be made to yield.[34] While this sometimes led to gross interference, at other times it also led to the protection and fostering of trade. Despite some limited efforts by Shivaji to encourage commerce, and even to build a coastal fleet, on the whole the Marathas remained oblivious of the benefits to be reaped from peaceful commerce.[35]

What were the social origins of the leading supporters of Shivaji? Although Sabhasad gives a list of the *silahdars*, *subahdars*, commanders of the cavalry and infantry (*mavles*), chief *karkuns* and household officers of Shivaji,[36] no analysis of their social origin has as yet been made. Ranade says that unlike the leading officers of the Peshwas, 'None of the great men, who distinguished themselves in Shivaji's time were able to hand over to their descendants large landed estates.'[37] On the other hand, many of the leading supporters of Shivaji were themselves *deshmukhs* and *deshpandes* or petty *zamindars* (*mirasdars*). The ambition of these and in fact every official was to acquire a hereditary post or possession (*watan*), and having acquired it, to enlarge and augment it. The chief difference between this section and the Mughal nobility is that the bulk of the Mughal nobility did not have hereditary rights in land, and was, in consequence, far

importance till 1818. See K.A. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1817-1830* (London, 1957), p. 14.

[34]See Chapter XI.

[35]For the rapacity of the Maratha toll gatherers, see Francois Martin, *Memoires*, ed., Martineau; Kafi Khan, Vol. II, pp. 272-5, 738. See also the threat of Pratap Rai, *senapati* of Shivaji, to the merchants of Surat in 1672, demanding annual customs of the port (*mahsulat har salah, wa mal-i-sair sawat sanwai waqai*) on pain of the complete destruction of the town 'so that not even a trace of its habitation would be left'. *Khatut-i-Shivaji*, Ms., Rajasthan University, transcript, p. 3.; Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, p. 205.

[36]*Subhasad*, pp. 97-9, 103.

[37]Ranade, *Rise of Maratha Power*, p. 70.

more dependent on the sovereign. Even then, despite the development of some kind of a bureaucracy, the Mughal nobility could not rise above the traditions and aspirations of the feudal order which continued to prevail in the country as a whole. Like the Mughal nobility, the officials of Shivaji, while representing the forces of integration up to a point, could themselves become a factor of disintegration in different circumstances. In a way, Shivaji himself paved the way for such an eventuality by advancing the demand for the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan, i.e., claiming for the Marathas the position of being *zamindars* over the entire Deccan.[38] The Maratha king thus placed a premium on traditional *zamindari* rights, and could hardly avoid sharing such rights with his leading officers when and if the Mughals could be coerced into conceding them.

As far as the peasant was concerned, the establishment of internal law and order, and the granting of various facilities for the restoration of extension of cultivation[39] must certainly have been welcomed by him, for the peasant was always prepared to give his support to anyone who could secure for him even the minimum conditions for carrying on his occupation and earning a precarious livelihood. It is difficult to form a precise idea of the actual scale of revenue demand under Shivaji. Sabhasad states that the state demand was two-fifths of the produce in grain.[40] To this must be added a large number of cesses which were customary and which we meet with in the Peshwa period.[41] It would be safe to assume that the state demand was heavy, and possibly comparable to the Mughal demand of half, being based upon the same set of revenue ideals. We are not in a position to judge whether it was, as Fryer[42] asserts, double the rate of former

[38]From the *Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Vol. I, p. 279, it appears that in its origin, *chauth* was a cess demanded by the *zamindars* from the areas under their domination. See Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 11-16; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 146-8, 349.

[39]The Maratha policy in this was in line with the traditional ideas advocated by Manu, and followed by the rulers of Delhi since the time of Muhammad Tuglaq. For details, see Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 92-3.

[40]*Sabhasad*, p. 29.

[41]Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 82-8.

[42]John Fryer, *A New Account of East Indies and Persia Being Nine Years Travels, 1672-81*, Vol. II, ed., W. Crooke, Hakluyt Society, p. 5; Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 350.

days in the absence of more precise information regarding the revenue system both under the Deccani states and under Shivaji.

It has been stated that plunder abroad was a normal part of a feudal set-up. Both the Rajputs and the Turkish Sultans subscribed to the ideal of an annual raid upon neighbouring states at the end of the rainy season. With the stabilisation of their administration, the Mughals did not stand in as much need of it as the Sultans of Delhi earlier, although *mulkgiri* remained an ideal with the army and the nobility. Shivaji's policy of plundering the neighbouring territories thus does not need any explanation. However, he gave to this policy a more systematic and extensive form. Though Shivaji justified his policy of plunder by pointing to the large armies he was compelled to maintain for his defence against the Mughal emperor,[43] his policy was based on the traditional ideology which to some extent was subscribed to by his opponents also.[44] However, the net result was the ruination of the peasantry in the Deccan both inside and outside Maharashtra, and the undermining of both the Mughal Empire and the state founded by Shivaji.

The rise of the Peshwas to supreme power in the state and the gradual eclipse of the Maratha king and the *ashtapradhan* did no imply as great a change in the Maratha polity as has been generally assumed. We have seen that the *zamindars*—the *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, etc.—continued to be a powerful element in Maratha polity, despite the attempts of Shivaji to curb their power. Under Raja Ram and Shahu, the leading officers of state, the *pratinidhi*, the *pant sachiv*, etc., became practically hereditary. As such, they enjoyed certain perquisites and privileges which were called *watan*.[45] It seems that the lands they had held before as *mokasa* or *saranjam* also became their hereditary possession[46] and began to be ermed *jagirs*. Inside these *jagirs*, as

[43] *Khatut-i-Shivaji*, No. 1, pp. 1-2; Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 354.

[44] Cf. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, pp. 355-6, where precisely the same view is taken.

[45] Sir John Malcolm, *A Memoir of Central India*, Vol. I, 3rd edn. (London, 1892), pp. 540-2; Vol. II, p. 59, has described at length the perquisites and privileges of the chief officers in the states of the Bhonsle Raja, the Holkar and the Sindhia. It is likely that these were traditional.

[46] After the annexation of the Peshwa's territories, *jagirdars* were divided into three categories. In the first class were those who had existed from the earliest times, such as the Nimbalkars of Phaltan, the Dafles, the Ghor-

in the territory of the more powerful chiefs, administrative and judicial power vested in the grantees.[47]

Apart from this, the general pattern of administration in the *swarajya* territory was more or less the same as in the time of Shivaji. The territory was divided into *subas*, *tarf* and *mauzas* as before, and various officers—*havaldars*, *kamvishdars*, *mamalatdars*, etc.—were appointed to them. Though some of these officers were allowed to remain in the same district for 30 or 40 years, and were sometimes succeeded by their sons, it does not seem that these offices had become generally hereditary.[48] The *deshmukhs*, *desais*, *patils*, etc., most of whom continued in their positions under Mughal rule also, helped in collecting the government's revenue as before the papers of the revenue officers not being accepted unless they were countersigned by the hereditary officers. The assessment was based upon a careful classification of land on the basis of productivity and means of irrigation.[49] The village *patils* occupied an important part in the system which in its working changed little till the time of Baji Rao II, when the old rules were thrown to the winds and land was farmed to the highest bidder. During his rule, many of the *mamlatdars* became revenue farmers, or disappeared from the scene. The assessment under the Peshwas, though perhaps not higher than in the time of Shivaji, was swelled by a large number of cesses. The revenue demand was thus heavy, but due to the prevalence of peace, the lot of the peasant was better than that of his unfortunate brethren outside the *swarajya* areas.

The rise of 'a new nobility' consisting of military chiefs and

pades of Mudhol, etc. In the second class were 'the old aristocracy of Shivaji and his descendents' such as the Pradhans, the Pratinidhi, Angria and the Raja of Akkalkot. A third class was that which was raised by the Peshwas. See Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, Vol. III (Calcutta, 1918), p. 493. It will be seen that the old *zamindars* and the officials of the *ashtapradhan* are all classified as *jagirdars*. This suggests that the *jagirs* of these officials had become hereditary, and as such, indistinguishable from the position of the *zamindar*.

[47]Malcolm, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, pp. 538-9; Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change*, pp. 52-6; Sen, *Administrative System*, p. 206.

[48]Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 265, 208. This point has to be investigated more fully. These officials were not regarded as hereditary in the later Maratha principalities. See Malcolm, *Memoirs*, pp. 538-9.

[49]Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 258-9.

their dependents affected the Maratha state chiefly in its external aspect. These chiefs were required to raise their own troops, and were paid by the assignment of *mokasa* and *saranjams* out of the Maratha claim for *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* from the territories comprising the Mughal Empire. A part of the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* was reserved for the Maratha government, but the individual *sardars* had to be assigned their responsibility for collecting this also. When the Mughal government formally granted to the Marathas the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan, the arrangements about them had to be regularised and formalised. As is known, a complicated division of these cesses was made between the Maratha king and the leading *sardars*, including the Peshwa. The *sardeshmukhi* was reserved for the Maratha king and was to be realised by him directly from the peasants. Of the *chauth*, three-quarters was to be assigned to the various chiefs as *saranjam* for their own expenses and the expenses of their troops. Another six per cent, called *sahotra*, was reserved for the *pant sachiv*, while three per cent (*nadgaunda*) was at the king's disposal to be granted to different persons at different times at his pleasure. The remainder, or 16 per cent was reserved for the king.[50]

The following points about this system deserve to be noted :

1. The king's share of the *chauth* was to be collected for him by his leading officers, the *peshwa*, *pratinidhi*, etc. The Maratha king thus became, to some extent, a pensioner of his leading officers. This process was carried further by assigning to these officers the responsibility of maintaining different departments of the king's establishment also.[51]
2. The *saranjams* granted to the leading chiefs, though at the king's pleasure in theory, tended to be hereditary from the outset. Efforts to place a check on the local ambitions of these officers by the provision that their chief agents would be appointed by the Peshwa were ineffective from the beginning.
3. The system created a multiplicity of local agents with whom the peasant had to deal. Its practical implications

[50]See Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 272-311 for the details.
[51]Ibid., pp. 275-7.

have been graphically described by Khafi Khan.[52] He says that the arrangements 'fell very hard upon the *raiyats*, the government officers and the *jagirdars*; and in every *mahal* two sets of Maratha agents were appointed—one called the *kamaishdars* for collecting the *chauth*, the other the *gumashta* of the *sardeshmukhi* for realising the ten per cent. On the roll of the collection (*baraward*) the signature of the *sarrishta-dar* of the *sardeshmukhi* were first placed. Apart from that they also realised separately the customary imposts.' Secondly, inclusive of *abwabs* called *faujdari*, *shiqdari*, *ziafat*, etc., the Marathas were 'to receive merely half the total revenue recorded in the government roll'.

Besides this, the Marathas appointed their own collectors of *rahdari* in each district. 'They exacted twice or three times more than (the most) tyrannical *faujdars*.'

Thus, in each district, three regular collectors of Raja Shahu were stationed with parties of horsemen and footmen: at the office (*kachahari*) where the land revenue and the *sair* was collected, at the guard houses (*thanas*) for customs, and at the posts for *rahdari*.[53]

Apart from this, in some areas where the villages had been laid waste by the Marathas, and which had again been brought under cultivation under special agreement, such as the *mahals* about Nandurbar, in Khandesh, Berar and other places, the Marathas disregarded the agreement and made different arrangements. 'They recognised three shares: one was for the *jagirdar*, one they took themselves and the third they left to the *raiyats*.'[54]

From the above analysis it might be concluded that the so called feudal system was established chiefly in the areas outside *swarajya*, and that its net result was to pave the way for the ultimate emergence of a series of Maratha states in those areas. In other words, from this time onwards, the Maratha movement should be seen not as a unified movement, but as the parallel

[52]Khafi Khan, Vol. II, pp. 781-90. Sen, *Military System of the Marathas* (Bombay 1958), p. 47 is not right in ascribing these remarks to Bhimsen.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

movement of a series of feudatory chiefs who only cooperated with each other for some common purposes, and for the carving out of independent principalities of their own out of the decaying Mughal Empire.[55] Secondly, the growth of Maratha power outside the *swarajya* area brought no relief to the peasants in those areas. In some parts of the Deccan, the Marathas raised the land revenue to two-thirds.[56] In other areas, there was no diminution in the previous demand, but from the multiplicity of the agents the peasant had to deal with, and their propensity to levy additional cesses for their benefit, his burdens might rather be greater than before. As against this, the peasant could now pursue his vocation in comparative peace.

The expansion of Maratha power into Malwa and Gujarat, and subsequently into northern India brought forward hardly any new features or ideas. In Malwa and Gujarat, the claim for *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* was rapidly commuted into a demand for the cession of land, and was followed soon after by the outright transfer of these provinces to the Marathas. The Maratha policy in these areas may, therefore, be considered as forming a part of the third or final stage of development.

In Rajasthan, the Marathas did not demand *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* but imposed *khandani* or *mamlat* (tribute) on the rajas.[57] The only area they brought under their direct administration was Ajmer which was considered strategically important. As long as the tribute was paid, the Marathas did not interfere in the internal administration of the Rajput states. Maratha policy towards the Rajput states thus closely parallels the Mughal policy. However, there were some important differences in its actual working. The tribute imposed by the Marathas upon the Rajput states, exclusive of the campaign funds exacted by them for helping rival princes, was far heavier than the Mughal tribute. The Mughals had generally demanded only the supply of an armed contingent. Even this demand had carried with it the possibility of an imperial *mansab* and the assignment of addi-

[55]Ranade, *Rise of Maratha Power*, p. 6.

[56]It seems no excuse that the Marathas had helped to restore cultivation in these areas—apparently by ceasing to plunder! Cf. Sen, *Military System*, p. 43.

[57]*Selections from the Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. IX, pp. 280-2. The imposts were also called *mamlat*; see Sen, *Military System*, p. 39.

tional *jagirs* inside or outside Rajputana. There was no such prospect of gainful service under the Marathas. Default in the payment of the tribute implied the threat of the claims of a rival prince being backed by the Marathas, whereas payment exhausted the treasury and led to the growing exploitation of the peasantry. This was the chief reason why the Marathas, unlike the Mughals, were unable to win the loyal support of any of the Rajput princes even for a limited time.

We now come to the third or final stage of the development of the Maratha polity. Hardly any work has as yet been done on the development of the Maratha polity under the Bhonsle, the Holkar and the Sindhia. However, from Malcolm's account, it would seem that the pattern of Maratha administration in these areas followed, to a considerable extent, the pattern of administration in the old *swarajya* territories.[58] The following would seem to be the main features :

1. The Marathas did not displace the *zamindars* and the hereditary chiefs in the areas ruled by them, or disturb the old pattern of land revenue administration there. The chiefs were allowed to remain practically autonomous, subject to the payment of tribute or quit rent. However, they were not allowed the great powers and privileges they had enjoyed under the Mughals.
2. Marathas were not appointed '*zamindar* or *canoongo* of a province, or to any hereditary district or village office north of the Narmada'. They, however, controlled the chief offices and supplied the armed following, and were granted *saranjams* for their support. These were for life only and were not hereditary. It is not clear if the *saranjams* were transferable.[59]
3. The Mughal *jagirdars* were completely displaced. The holders of various types of charitable grants (*inam, madad-i-maash*, etc.) were allowed to enjoy their grants, but they were reduced in many cases, and required to pay various

[58]Malcolm, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, 531 ff, 538; Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 42.

[59]Malcolm, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 8; II, p. 57 1B, *et. seq.*; Baden Powell, *Land System*, Vol. II, pp. 465-72.

charges, though on a lower scale from what was normal.[60]

4. *Mamlatdars, kamvishdars*, etc., were appointed to collect the land revenue from the areas not under the great chiefs. Considerable reliance was placed upon the village headmen (*patil*, etc). The revenue was either fixed on the individual peasant, and collected through the *patil*, or assessed as a lump sum on the *pargana* (*mauzawar*) which was then distributed over the villages in consultation with the *patil*. 'Where the *patil* was not strong enough to secure payment with requisite punctuality, or where from any course they thought it would pay better, the Maratha either reduced him to a normal position or gave over the village to a revenue farmer (*malguzar*) who agreed to pay in the whole sum assessed.' A *malguzar* might thus be put over several villages.[61]

British writers of the nineteenth century have laid considerable emphasis on the reliance of the Marathas upon village headmen, equating this with some kind of a *ryotwari* system.[62] Thus, Baden Powell says that 'the Marathas did not encourage great middlemen, the *zamindar* and the *taluqdar* of the Gangetic plain or Bengal; they knew how much revenue such people absorb and intercept.'[63]

However, it is doubtful if there was any fundamental difference in the working of the Maratha revenue system in Central India and the Deccan from what it was in North India under the Mughals. The British failed to understand the true position of the *zamindar* both in North India and the Deccan. In the former they pictured him as an absolute owner of land and sacrificed

[60]The quit rent collected by the Marathas from holders of *inam* lands, was called *jodi* in Madras and Bombay. See Baden Powell, *Land System*, Vol. II, p. 155.

[61]Baden Powell, *Land System*, Vol. II, pp. 464-5.

[62]R anade, *Rise of Maratha Power*, pp. 12-13 also believed that the *mirasi* tenures of M aharashtra were *ryotwari*, and that 'the village communities in north and north-western India were similarly distinguished from the village organisation in Maharashtra by those communities retaining joint responsibility and ownership, which have given place to individual ownership in Maharashtra.' It is doubtful if this point can be sustained. See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 118-28.

[63]Baden Powell, *Land System*, Vol. II, p. 460.

the interests of the peasant cultivator. In the latter they saw a justification, where none existed, for the *ryotwari* system.

A somewhat surprising feature which has been little noticed by modern historians, of the Maratha polity in its final phase, is the role of the commercial classes in government and administration. This feature has been commented upon at some length by Malcolm. 'The lands of the Maharatha princes are usually rented' he says, 'and as many of the renters are either bankers, or men supported by that class, they have acquired and maintain an influence both in the councils of the state, and the local administration of the provinces, that give them great power, which they direct to the cause of accumulation.'[64]

Malcolm goes on to describe how the bankers not only held the peasant in their clutches by advancing money to him, but how their influence over the local officials and princes enabled them to transport goods across the country and insure them against loss, at no great charge even in times of apparent anarchy.[65] The role of bankers, such as the family of Jagat Seth, in the revenue administration of Bengal, is too well-known to need any mention here.

Whatever may have been the nature of the Maratha movement at the outset, it appears that in some of the states that came into existence as a result of it, the forces of feudalism were kept in check, and the commercial classes accorded a more favourable opportunity than before for the accumulation of capital and for exercising political influence. The process of 'feudal disintegration' during the eighteenth century should not, therefore, be taken to imply the complete disruption of authority, or the end of the possibility of any progressive development in the successor states that were created. The internal character of each state is, however, a matter for detailed investigation.

A study of the Maratha polity thus shows that the Maratha movement, which started as a regional reaction against the centralising Mughal Empire, resulted in the reproduction in regional centres of many of the essential features of the Deccani-Mughal system of administration adopted by Shivaji. Despite such an outer appearance, the Maratha movement did not represent a

[64]Malcolm, *Memoir*, Vol. II, p. 38.

[65]Ibid., pp. 91-7.

reassertion of traditional Hindu ideas in the political field: the political ideal of Shivaji was not Rama but Akbar.[66] The persistent trend and tradition in favour of the curbing of feudal elements, the establishment of a strong monarchy, and the simultaneous growth of the political importance of commercial elements in some of these states suggests that the process of feudal disintegration in India in the eighteenth century was a much more complex process than has been generally imagined. The real triumph of the feudal elements had to await, oddly enough, the establishment of British rule in India.

[66]See the letter to Aurangzeb from Shivaji, drafted by Shivaji's secretary, Nil Prabhu, in which Shivaji compares the policy and achievements of Akbar and Aurangzeb. He calles Akbar 'the architect of the fabric of empire', lauds his policy of *sulh-i-kul*, and says, 'Through the auspicious effect of his sublime disposition, wherever he (Akbar) bent the glance of his august wish, Victory and Success advanced to welcome him on the way', etc. *Khatut-i-Shivaji*, No. 17, pp. 15-18, translated by Sarkar in *Shivaji*, pp. 306-9.

IX

Shivaji and the Maratha Landed Elements

A GREAT deal of attention has been paid by Indian scholars in recent years to analysing the character, composition and role of *zamindars* during medieval times.[1] The new insight gained on several important points has deepened the understanding of the social, political and administrative problems of the period. In the case of Maharashtra we are fortunate in having a large number of Marathi and Persian documents, many of them from the pre-Shivaji and Shivaji periods. Many of these documents have their Mughal counterparts which may be of use in re-examining some current notions regarding Shivaji's policy towards the landed elements and officials in Maharashtra.[2] The present paper is meant to be a preliminary step in this direction.

Unlike medieval Europe, the 'nobility' in India was never a legal category. Medieval Indian writers of course had definite notions about it. High birth, hereditary connection with land, high office in the royal service, a certain code of conduct which included good breeding and manners, a certain style of living,

Published in *Indian Society: Historical Probings, In Memory of D.D. Kosambi*, ed., R.S. Sharma (New Delhi, 1974), pp. 248-63. The article has been slightly abbreviated.

[1]See in particular Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System*, pp. 136-89; S. Nurul Hasan, 'The Position of the Zamindars', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 4 (1964), pp. 107-19; B.R. Grover, 'Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India', *IESHR*, Vol. I, (1964), pp. 1-23 and 'The Position of Desai in the Pargana Administration of Subah Gujarat under the Mughals', *Procs. IHC*, Vol. XXIV (1961), pp. 150-4.

[2]An exhaustive study of the voluminous documentary material on the subject is a desideratum.

bravery in the field of battle, and a background of traditional learning—these are some of the points emphasised by medieval Muslim writers in their conception of nobility. The attitude of Hindus in this connection was not far different.[3] The author of the *Ajnapatra* considers ownership and control of land as the principal deciding factor. He states that there were 96 noble families in Maharashtra, consisting of *deshmukhs*, *deshkulkarnis*, etc., who were autonomous chiefs and 'partners in the kingdom, as it were'.[4]

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the most prominent elements in Maharashtra, both socially and politically, were the *watandars* and the *sardars*. The bigger *watandars* held the positions of *deshmukhs* or *desais*, *deshpandes* or *deshkulkarnis*, *muqaddams*, etc. The *sardars* were persons who had a military following. Many of the *sardars* had been enrolled in the service of the Deccani states as loose auxiliaries (*bargirs*). Apart from plundering the enemy territories, they received as their salaries, assignments of land revenue, generally called *muqasa* (Marathi: *mokasa*).[5] Thus the right to share in land revenue on the basis of hereditary title and/or on behalf of the state constituted the principal means of livelihood for these sections.

With the break-up of the Bahmanid empire and the growing pressure of the Mughals upon the Deccani states, the process of assimilation of the *deshmukhs*, *desais*, etc., into the politico-military structure of the Deccani states was speeded up. Malik Ambar was by no means the first to initiate this policy. The policy is associated with Burhan Nizam Shah (1508-53), in whose reign

[3]Apart from Barani, *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, Advice VI, see *Ain*, Vol. II, Jarrett, 2nd edn., pp. 56-8; *Gwaliyar Namah*, B.M. Add. 16, 859 (A.M.U. Rotograph) ff.61a-99b; and the various *Akhlaqs* such as *Akhlaq-i-Janhari*, *Akhlaq-i-Jahangiri*, etc. For Hindu ideas, see in particular *Ajnapatra*, Secs. III, VI.

[4]The craftsmen of various types were excluded, but the very wealthy merchants were sometimes included in the 'aristrocracy'. We do not find any reference to such wealthy Maratha merchants during the seventeenth century. See Ramachandra Pant, *Ajnapatra*, ed., K.N. Sane, Vol. VI (Bombay, 1929). In Maharashtra, the task of establishing new markets was entrusted to a *seth* or a *mahajan*. Such persons were entitled to separate *watan* or *sheterpan*. *Peshwa Daftar*, Vol. II, pp. 134-5, Vol. VIII, p. 223; Vol. VII, pp. 284-5; Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 331-5.

[5]For the position of the *watandar* or hereditary assignees of land revenue, see *Ajnapatra*, Secs. VI-VII. For *mokasa* see f.n. 15, p. 106.

the brahmins acquired great influence in the state. Ibrahim Adil Shah (1534-57) started the practice of maintaining revenue records in Marathi and kept a force of 30,000 Marathas as *bargirs*.[6] The old Maratha families of the area, the Morays, the Nimbalkars, etc., also received many favours from the ruler. Malik Ambar carried this policy a step further. He took a close interest in the affairs of the Maratha *watandars*. The family records of many *deshmukhs* and *desais* prove that Malik Ambar played an important role in their rise and in resolving their mutual disputes.

Among the families which rose into prominence during Malik Ambar's period as a result of his general policy of allying with the local elements was the family of Shahji Bhonsle. The Bhonsles had some *deshmukhi* rights in the Poona *pargana*.[7] An important step in their rise was the grant to Shahji in 1622 of the *mokasa* of the *parganas* of Sholapur and Poona by Malik Ambar.[8] The background to this is interesting. The area from Sholapur to Poona, including the Konkan, had always been a bone of contention between the kingdoms of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. When Malik Ambar entered into an alliance with Ibrahim Adil Shah II in 1607, Sholapur *pargana* was assigned to Bijapur.[9] The sovereign rights over it were, however, retained by Ahmadnagar, for a number of cases between the *deshmukhs*, *muqaddams*, etc., of the area were referred to the Nizam Shahi court for decision. A part of the *pargana* was assigned in *mokasa* to the Nizam Shahi nobles.[10] When Ibrahim Adil Shah broke with Malik Ambar, the Bijapuris, led by Murari Pandit and others, overran the entire area up to Poona, including the Konkan. Shahji was asked to help in ousting the 'Adil Shahis, and as a reward was given *mokasa* in Poona'.[11] It was from this time that

[6]John Briggs, *History of the Rise of Mahomedan Power in India*, tr. from Ferishta's original account in Persian, Vol. III (second Indian rpt.; Calcutta, 1966), pp. 47-8, 134.

[7]See J.N. Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, p. 29.

[8]K.V. Purandare, *Shiv Caritra Sahitya* (Poona, 1930), (hereafter *SCS*), Vol. I, Nos. 21, 35 (*Mahzar* dated 12B, *Vaishakh Sake* 1545/25, *Rajab* 1031 H/5 July 1622).

[9]*Basatin-us-Salatin* (Hyderabad), pp. 263-5.

[10]*SCS*, Vol. I, Nos. 9-21, and Intro., pp. 15-17.

[11]*SCS*, Vol. I, Nos. 21, 35; *Basatin*, pp. 304-5. Later when Shahji unfurled the banner of independence on behalf of Murtaza Nizam Shah,

Shahji rose rapidly. It is typical of the situation that Shahji won his spurs in a successful contest against a brother Maratha.

The *mokasa* granted to Shahji was not 'hereditary', for it was transferable, and we find frequent cases of such transfers in the Deccan kingdom during the period. In practice, however, the Bhonsles soon began to look upon the Poona *mokasa* as a hereditary *jagir*. By 1622, following the break between Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, the unity of the Deccani states against the Mughals had come to an end. An era of mutual strife and Mughal incursions began. In this situation, the Maratha *watandars* found an opportunity to augment their resources and to claim greater independence for themselves. Many of them were courted by the Mughal emperors with offers of large *mansabs*. Shahji himself was accorded a *mansab* of 5000 by Shah Jahan in 1629.

By the treaty of 1636, the Mughals annexed the northern part of the Ahmadnagar kingdom, the southern part being assigned to Bijapur. In consequence, the Mughals inherited the frontier disputes regarding Sholapur and the Konkan between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. The *deshmukhs*, *desais*, etc., found the frontier tract on both sides to be lightly administered as, for the time being, the interests of both the sides lay elsewhere, Bijapur being busy in overrunning the Karnatak and Shah Jahan being preoccupied with Central Asian affairs. Hence, the *deshmukhs*, *desais* and the other *mirasdars* found the field free to themselves. The resulting situation is described graphically both by Sabhasad and by Ramchandra Pant, the author of the *Ajnapatra*. Sabhasad states that the *patils*, *kulkarnis*, *deshmukhs*, etc., 'used to do the collection work (*kamvishi*) and paid what they pleased to the state'. Out of their collections they paid only a small part to the government as contribution (*khand*). 'In consequence, the *mirasdars* grew and strengthened themselves by building bastions, castles (*vade*) and strongholds in the villages, enlisting footmen and musketeers. They never waited on the revenue officer of the government and resorted to fighting if he urged they could pay more. This class had become unruly and seized the country.'[12]

Shivaji rose to power against this background. There is a persistent belief, shared by some eminent historians, that Shivaji

Murari Pandit was deputed with an army of 20,000 to help Shahji (Lahori, *Padshahnama*, Vol. I a, pp. 397-8).

[12] *Sabhasad*, p. 30; *Ajnapatra*, Sec. VI.

was opposed to *zamindari* or superior rights in land and that he tried to establish direct relations with the peasantry by appointing his own agents to collect land revenue. It has also been said that he was opposed to the *jagirdari* system.[13] A careful study shows these beliefs to be largely unfounded. In a famous passage Sabhasad described Shivaji's policy towards the landed elements. He says that Shivaji demolished the bastions, castles and strongholds of the *desais*, and where there were strong forts he posted his own garrison. 'Thus no power was left in the hands of the *mirasdars*.' Even more important, he prohibited 'all that the *mirasdars* used to take at their sweet will, as gifts (*inam*) or by way of revenue farming (*ijara*), and fixed the dues of the *zamindars* from the villages in cash and grain as well as the rights and perquisites of the *deshmukhs* and the *deshkulkarnis*, and the *patil* (and) the *kulkarni*.'[14]

From this statement two things may be inferred: firstly, Sabhasad points to the final result of what Shivaji was able to achieve and shows that this took a good deal of time and effort on Shivaji's part. The survey of land and detailed revenue reforms could be carried out only towards the end of Shivaji's reign. Therefore, his tussle with the landed elements occupied almost his entire reign. Secondly, his major conflict was with the bigger *deshmukhs*, *deshkulkarnis*, etc., who also had the resources to build castles and engage armed forces. The experience of the Mughals within their own territories may provide us a clue to the approach by the other medieval rulers in a similar situation. The Mughals classified the land under their control into two

[13] S.N. Sen (*Administrative System*, pp. 30, 45) says that Shivaji 'made it a rule not to assign any jagir to any officers, civil or military', and that while for reasons of expediency he left the *deshmukhs* in the enjoyment of their old rights, he appointed government agents to collect the land revenue and they established direct relations with the peasants. See also M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*, pp. 68-70; G.S. Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. III,. p. 56; Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 351; V.T. Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 30.

[14] *Sabhasad*, p. 30. Sen, *Administrative System*, p. 39 adds the words 'according to the yield of the village'. But these words do not occur in Sane's text. In any case, we are not told how the yield was assessed. Similarly, Sarkar's statement (*Shivaji*, p. 351) that 'their dues were fixed after calculating the (exact) revenue of the village' is not borne out by the Sane text. See also *Ajnapatra*, Sec. VI, for the character and conduct of the bigger *watandars*.

sections called *zor-talab* and *raiyati*. The *zor-talab* areas were dominated by powerful *zamindars* or recalcitrant tribes and the collection of land revenue required military force. Generally, such areas were assigned in *jagir* only to the bigger nobles who had a large military contingent at their disposal.[15] Simultaneously, the Mughals had attempted to ascertain the actual produce of the soil on the basis of a detailed assessment, and to treat the *zamindars* as collectors of land revenue rather than as autonomous chiefs. Thus they had attempted to convert *peshkashi* or *ghair amli zamindars* into *khiaraji zamindars*.[16]

Shivaji's policy had obvious parallels with this. While the prerogatives of the bigger *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, etc., were sought to be restricted and brought under strict administrative control by Shivaji, this did not at all imply that in Maharashtra the *zamindars* ceased to play an important part in the collection of land revenue. In the *qaulnama* of 1678 by Annaji Datto, the *deshmukhs*, the *deshkulkarnis*, etc., of Rohidkhore are asked not only to survey the villages and assess the produce but also to collect the produce after their estimates have been proved correct.[17] Socially also the *deshmukhs* and others remained the most important elements in the Maratha countryside. Thus, no change was effected in the basic social relationships.

Shivaji's contest with the *deshmukhs*, *desais*, etc., may be divided into a number of phases. The first phase lasted roughly up to 1660 and centred mainly around gaining the allegiance of the Maval *deshmukhs*, thus enlarging and consolidating Shivaji's *jagir* around Poona. Although some of the Maval *deshmukhs* were won over by Shivaji through Kanhoji Jedhe, *deshmukh* of Kari, others remained divided in their allegiance till 1660, mainly because of the influence of the Morays of Javli and Baji Ghor-

[15]N.A. Siddiqi, 'The Classification of Villages under the Mughals', *IESHR*, Vol. I, No. 3, 1964, pp. 4-5.

[16]*Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Vol. I, pp. 21-2, 173-4, Suppl. Ch. VI, pp. 228-99; N.A. Siddiqi, 'Classification of Villages', pp. 5-6.

[17]Rajwade, *MIS*, Vol. XV, pp. 268-70. Documents of a similar purport for the Peshwa period are cited by Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 279-82, 325-8. The *manpan* or privileges enjoyed by the *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, *muqaddams*, etc., are set out in detail in a number of documents (see Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 248-51).

pade of Bhor.[18] These powerful *deshmukhs*, who belonged to old families, were interested in safeguarding their own position in the Maval area with the help and support of the Bijapur government. They were not prepared to countenance Shivaji's claim to independence, which would imply a status higher than their own. Shivaji ousted Sambhaji of Supa though the latter's sister, Tuka Bai, was married to him, and ousted Chandra Rao Moray from Javli. In 1659, when Afzal Khan marched against Shivaji, both these *deshmukhs* joined his (Afzal Khan's) standard. On behalf of Afzal Khan, Khandoji Khopde, *deshmukh* of Utroli, won over a number of Maval *deshmukhs* to his side. Even Baji Nimbalkar, *deshmukh* of Phaltan, who is described as 'one of the biggest *zamindars* of the Deccan'[19] and whom Shivaji had reconverted to Hinduism, joined Afzal Khan willy-nilly. Others who joined him included the *Savant* of Wadi, and Bhaskar Krishnaji Kulkarni.[20] Even after the defeat and death of Afzal Khan, all the *deshmukhs* of the area did not rally to Shivaji's side. Babaji Ram Honap, a former *deshpande* of Poona, joined Siddi Salabat in his siege of Shivaji in Purandar.[21] It was only after 1660, when Siddi Salabat concluded a truce with Shivaji and retreated to his own *jagir* of Karnool, that Shivaji could consolidate his hold on the Maval area.

Even before Shivaji had consolidated his position in and around Poona and the Maval area, his attention had been drawn to the Konkan. In 1657 he had invaded north Konkan and brought it under his control. His policy towards the *deshmukhs* and others in that region is not known. But we are told that many smaller *deshmukhs* of south Konkan had invited this rising star.[22] Unlike the *deshmukhs* in the uplands or *desh*, the *deshmukhs* in the Konkan had never fully submitted to Bijapur, and were eager to use Shivaji for their purposes. Common opposi-

[18]Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. I, pp. 118-21. See also Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 59.

[19]Bhimsen, *Dilkusha*, B.M.Ms (Aligarh Muslim University, Rotograph) ff. 122, 125. In 1673 Baji Nimbalkar went over to the side of the Mughals.

[20]Sarkar, *Shivaji*, pp. 43-4; Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. I, pp. 98, 103-4, 112, 125.

[21]Muhammed Kazim, *Alamgir Namah* (Calcutta, 1865-73), p. 584; Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 81.

[22]Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 55.

tion to Bijapur enabled Shivaji to come to terms with the Sidi of Janjira and the Bhonsles of Kudal between 1657 and 1659. However, in 1661, when Shivaji invaded north Konkan, he had to reckon with the overt and covert hostility of the Hindu and Muslim *deshmukhs*. The Raja of Shringarpur and *Savant* of Wadi, the *deshmukh* of Wai, etc., opposed Shivaji. Even the *Savant* of Kudal adopted a prevaricating attitude. Shivaji annexed the territories of the Raja of Shringarpur, but he allowed others to continue. However, he imposed *chauth* upon them which was not the case with the *deshmukhs* of the *desh* area.[23] Shivaji failed against the bigger *deshmukhs* at the political level, but at the social level he tried to strengthen his position by marrying into the families of the older noble *deshmukhs*, such as the Shirkes, the Mohites, the Nimbalkars, etc.[24] That Shivaji was able to form these alliances was both a measure of the strong position he had already acquired, and an index of the fact that the Maratha society was a comparatively open society in which a successful military chief and landholder with an obsure background could be assimilated with the older 'noble' families within a generation or so.

In the second phase, between 1663 and 1674, Shivaji's energies were occupied mainly with meeting and repelling the Mughal invasion of his territories. It is hardly likely that during this period he would have had the opportunity to define his relations with the *deshmukhs* or embark upon new policies. By 1674, however he entered a new stage. The Mughal invasion of his homeland had failed. Bijapur fell a prey to factional squabbles, and its dismemberment seemed to be imminent. In order to cope with the new situation and place himself in a position to bargain with all parties on an equal footing,[25] and not just as a rebel, Shivaji formally crowned himself in 1674. It also strengthened his position internally in relation to the older *deshmukh* families.

At the time of his coronation Shivaji imposed upon all

[23]Ibid., p. 83.

[24]Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. I, p. 145.

[25]In his letter to Baji Ghorpade of Mudhol, written in March 1677, Shivaji emphasises that as an independent ruler he could talk to Qutb Shah of Golconda on a footing of equality. *Shivaji Souvenir*, p. 146; Sardesai, *Main Currents*, Vol. I, pp. 240-1.

watandars a special cess called *miras-patti* or *singhasana-patti*.[26] It would appear that this cess was meant to serve a double purpose: it filled the coffers of the Chhatrapati and also compelled the *deshmukhs*, *desais*, etc., to formally accept his claim to the status of a sovereign king. On the other hand, it also implied that Shivaji duly acknowledged the hereditary rights of all those who paid this cess.[27] It was only after this that Shivaji was able to embark upon a detailed assessment of his territories. This was the third and final phase in which Shivaji was in a position to take steps to bring the *deshmukhs* under fuller control. We do not know to what extent Shivaji succeeded in forcing all the *mirasdars* to accept a detailed asessment of the land and to put them under the strict supervision of officials appointed by him. Even if he succeeded partially it represented a major achievement.[28]

A careful assessment of Shivaji's policies shows that the aim of establishing direct relations with the peasants by appointing *karkuns* to collect the land revenue remained largely unfulfilled. The system could only be applied to *khalisa* (crown) lands, especially to the territories in the uplands (*desh*)[29] which were in the possession of smaller *deshmukhs*. There is ample evidence to suggest that Shivaji was not opposed to hereditary rights in land as such. The *Ajnapatra*, which represents the ideals of the age, says that 'existing *watans* should be continued.... Whatever has continued to them from the past should not be allowed to

[26]According to Rajwade (*Aitihasik Patra Vyavahar*, XVI, f.n., p. 12) it was *miras-patti*, but came to be called *singhasana-patti* as it was levied within six months of the accession.

[27]Thus the *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, etc., of Hukeri had been detained in Rajgarh till they paid 10,000 *huns* from Hukeri, and 10,000 *huns* from the other *parganas* as *chauth* and *khandani*. When they agreed to pay the *khandani* as *singhasana-patti* within one year and four weeks they were released with honour (*SCS*, Vol. VII, p. 3). Evidently, *singhasana-patti* was levied from all *watandars*.

[28]Annaji Datto's circular letter regarding revenue assessment was issued only in 1678 (V.K. Rajwade, *MIS*, Vol. XV, pp. 368-70). Earlier assessments were probably of a summary character (Ibid. Vol. XX, pp. 94-6),.

[29]This is suggested by Sabhasad, who says that Shivaji applied his reforms to the *desh* conquered from the Adil Shahis, Nizam Shahis and the Mughals (p. 29). The administrative pattern of the south Maratha area dominated by the bigger *watandars* (later called *jagirdars*) was different, and these *watandars* retained their importance till 1818. See V.T. Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 28; Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change*, p. 14.

increase nor to become less even by a little.' But the beneficiaries were to be strictly controlled, and not allowed to quarrel among themselves. The author is strongly opposed to the grant of hereditary preferments (*vritti* or *inam*) to royal servants as it made the incumbents lazy and negligent and led to the permanent loss of revenue to the state. Nevertheless, the author says: 'It is a sin to resume a *vritti* however small it may be. Nor should the *vritti* of one person be transferred to another.'[30]

It would thus appear that the backbone of Shivaji's movement was represented by the smaller and middle *watandars* and that it was they who stood to benefit most by his centralising policy, and by his attempt to curb the overgrown power of the bigger *deshmukhs* and to help and encourage the settlement of land and the extension and improvement of cultivation. Shivaji's claim to *sardeshmukhi* rights over the entire Deccan should be seen in the background of his conflict with the bigger and older *deshmukhs*. Some of the older families, such as the Nimbalkars and the Shirkes as well as the Bhonsles, had received special privileges from the 'Adil Shahi rulers by way of grant to them of *sardeshmukhi* rights. The nature and origin of *sardeshmukhi* rights are not clear. It seems that at first these rights were given to only a few families which had rendered particular services to the rulers.'[31]

Later, this appears to have become more common, for we find some instances of the grant of *sar-i-muqaddami* rights over some villages.[32] The claim of Shivaji to the exclusive right to *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan was thus primarily directed at the older families which had enjoyed special favour with the Adil Shahi rulers.

Turning our attention to Shivaji's officials, as discussed at length in the previous chapter, the widespread belief that Shivaji was opposed to the *jagirdari* system is apparently based on

[30] *Ajnapatra*, Secs. VI, VII.

[31] K.V. Purandare, *SCS*, Vol. VII, p. 4.

[32] Thus see grant of *sarmuqqadami* of Tapa Khedewar, *subah* Rajapur, to Bhikaji Naik, *SCS*, Vol. VII, No 31, 13 March 1562, S./14 January 1641. For the grant of *sardeshmukhi watan* to his favourite, Ramchandra Nilkanth, by Raja Ram, see *SCS*, Vol. VII, No 30, p. 31.

Sabhasad.[33] Service tenures, in the different forms of *mokasa*, were transferred fairly frequently from one noble to another.[34] The terms *jagir* and *khalisa* were, it seems, rarely used till the conquest of the old Nizam Shahi area by the Mughals. A few such references are found for the Poona area during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign.[35] The word *saranjam* too occurs rarely at this period, and in the few documents where it does, it seems to signify the grant of a specified sum of money from a village for the maintenance of troops.[36] Later, in the Peshwa period, the word becomes common. Possibly at first it was meant to signify a grant made by the Peshwa as distinct from the one made by the Maratha king, but in course of time, this distinction was erased and the terms *jagir*, *mokasa* and *saranjam* began to be used as synonyms. Initially neither *jagir* nor *mokasa* were hereditary. As we have seen, Shahji's *jagir* of Poona was granted in 1622 as *mokasa* in lieu of his services in ousting Murari Jagdev and the Adil Shahi troops from the area. Shivaji's activities and the growing weakness of the Adil Shahi government made it impossible for his *mokasa* in the Poona area to be

[33]See Chapter VIII, p. 106.

[34]See for example the case of Sholapur of which we have a fairly detailed history till the eighteenth century in *SCS*, Vol. VI, No 7, p. 33.

[35]Thus see *mahzar* dated S. 1590/A.D. 1668 in the Office of the Honap Deshpande, *subah* Poona, *SCS*, Vol. II, No. 99, pp. 127-8. The collection of Khan Walashan Fakhruddin Khan, *jagirdar*, *paragana* Poona for 1098 H /1610 S./A.D. 1688 for six months is given in a document as Rs 7001, (*SCS*, Vol. II, No. 101, pp. 130-1). But the word *jagir* is used earlier. Thus, in a document dated 5B. *Phagun* 1549 S./15 January 1628 the *sabnis jagir* (*dar*) and *naikwadi* of fort Purandar are asked to settle the villages (*SCS*, Vol. VII, No. 13). It is not clear whether the words *jagir* and *jagirdars* have the same connotation as the more commonly used words *mokasa* and *makasai* or *mokasiyani*.

[36]Thus in 1694, *saranjami watan* of Visaji Nilkantharao for 1500 *huns* was renewed by Raja Ram (*SCS*, Vol. II, No. 405, p. 8). It is significant that *saranjams* were already being regarded as *watan* or hereditary grants. See also Wilson's *Glossary*, p.465, where *saranjam* is regarded as being 'for the life of the grantee'. *Sabhasad*, pp. 45-9 uses *saranjam*, *mokasa* and *jagir* as interchangeable. Since *jagir* or *mokasa* included payment for the personal expenses of a noble as well as the cost of his contingent *saranjam* cannot be called a military assignment in contradiction to a *jagir*, and hence it cannot be maintained that it was only the military assignment which Shivaji was prepared to grant.

resumed or transferred. It is clear that in the rugged mountainous areas of Maharashtra the leading nobles, Maratha, Habshi and Afghans, were already inclined to look upon their *mokasas* as hereditary *jagirs*.

It is significant that the *Ajnapatra* deals only with the *watandars* and those granted a *vritti* or *inam*, the rights of both being hereditary. It largely ignores *jagir* or *mokasa*, i.e., non-hereditary grants. One reason for this may be that by the end of the seventeenth century definitely and possibly earlier, *mokasa* and *saranjams* had come to be considered hereditary.

It would thus appear that the Maratha officials never fully accepted the idea that assignments of land revenue for the service of the state were temporary in charcter. That being so, and with his own example before him, Shivaji was perhaps reluctant to continue the *mokasa* system. But in the circumstances in which he was placed, there was no other system readily available to him. We know that he did grant *mokasa mahals* on occasions.[37] While these cases do not conclusively establish that Shivaji accepted the *mokasa* system as it existed, it does raise some doubts as to exactly what aspect of the *mokasa* system he was opposed to. Perhaps his objection was to *mokasa* tenures in which a large tract of land was assigned to prominent nobles with full administrative powers. Hence his opposition to the grant of *mokasa mahals dar-o-bast*, i.e., whole *parganas* carrying administrative and revenue powers, and his injunction that the *mokasadars* be subjected to detailed revenue assessment 'like the *rayats*'.[38] If this interpretation be accepted, it would be justifiable to say that in essence Shivaji was attempting to bring the *mokasa* system in line with the Mughals' concept of *jagir*. Akbar had decisively defeated the attempt of the Atka Khail to regard *jagirs* as non-transferable. Nor were the *jagirdars* normally allowed to exercise administrative powers in their *jagirs*. The reforms of Shivaji would have had the same effect if they had succeeded fully. However, he had to reckon with the deep-seated attachment of the Marathas to hereditary grants.

It is not clear whether Shivaji succeeded in establishing the system of cash payments to soldiers. Sabhasad advises that

[37]For details see Chapter VIII.

[38]*Sabhasad*, pp. 27-8.

saranjam should be given to soldiers who worked hard in campaigns.[39] The *Chitnis* was specifically given the responsibility for grant of *mokasa*, *saranjam* and *barats*.[40] The salaries of the various officers indicated by Sabhasad could thus be paid either by a *barat*, i.e., an order on the treasury, or by the grant of a *saranjam* or *mokasa*.

It has been argued above that Shivaji had no desire either of doing away with the hereditary rights in land or of abolishing the *jagir* system. All that he attempted was to restrict the abuse of power and the encroachments made by the *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, etc , upon the privileges of the king. Even this led to a prolonged tussle, particularly with the bigger *deshmukhs*. His attempts to restrict and control the *mokasas* and to prevent the rise of a new type of hereditary rights in Maharashtra are also significant. These measures enabled Shivaji to lay the foundations of a strong centralised state in Maharashtra. Nonetheless, Shivaji neither wanted nor attempted any fundamental changes in the basic structure of Maratha society. The centralised structure of government created by him lacked any deep foundations. No detailed analysis has been made as yet of the social background of the officials, civil and military, who served Shivaji and rose to prominence under him. From a broad study it appears that the large majority of them were petty *watandars*, i.e., petty *deshmukhs*, *deshpandes*, *muqaddams*, etc.[41] In joining the banner of Shivaji, they were motivated by a variety of considerations. The desire for plunder and loot and personal associations with Shivaji appealed to their religious susceptibilities and pride as Marathas. But a very important factor was that they were themselves being oppressed and tyrannised by the bigger *deshmukhs*, who in certain measure, enjoyed the support and backing of the Bijapur goverment. Shivaji's conflict with the Bijapur government and with the bigger *deshmukhs*, and his attempt to curb the pretensions of the latter, were bound to

[39]*Sabhasad*, p. 27.

[40]See Memorandum regarding the duties of the *Chitnis* dated first regnal year of Shivaji (*Sanads and Treaties*, ed., Mawji Parasnis, Poona, 1913, pp. 127-30; Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 39-42.)

[41]This is based on a partial study of the names of *silahdars*, *subehdars*, the commanders of the cavalry and infantry and the chief *karkuns* and household officers of Shivaji given by *Sabhasad*, pp. 97-9, 103.

appeal to the smaller *watandars* who rallied to him.

The state created by Shivaji was thus based on deep-seated contradictions. Neither the material-technological nor the social-ideological framework of the country could provide any basis for a state based on the smaller *deshmukhs* and *mirasdars*. Hence the relations of Shivaji with the Maratha landed elements and the Maratha failure to sustain a centralised political framework for any length of time must be related to the social relations obtaining in the area.

X

Social Background to the Rise of the Maratha Movement during the Seventeenth Century

THE RISE of a powerful Maratha movement during the seventeenth century, and the emergence of the Marathas as the most potent political entity in India by the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, represents a remarkable social and political phenomenon which ought to interest historians concerned with the study of social change. The assumption that medieval Indian society was a static society has as much, or as little, justification as the earlier postulate of medieval European society being static. While a great deal of work has been done on different aspects of social change in medieval Europe, hardly any work of a similar nature has been done so far in relation to medieval India.

Different theories have been put forward to explain the rise of the Maratha movement in the seventeenth century, but none of them is satisfactory.[1] The most popular, as well as the most persistent theory seeks to relate the rise of the Maratha movement to certain religious policies adopted by Aurangzeb. However, this theory lacks a historical basis. The early phase of the expansion of Maratha power under Shahji and later under his son, Shivaji, coincided with the reign of Shah Jahan, during a period when he had veered round to a policy of broad religious toleration.[2] Further during this period, the conflict was, in the

Published in *IESHR*, Vol. X, No. 3, 1973, pp. 209-17.

[1]See Chapter IX.

[2]S.R. Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (Delhi, 1940), pp. 103-4. See also Percival Spear, *A History of India* (London, 1965), Vol. II, p. 59.

main, between the Marathas and the Deccani Muslim state of Bijapur, and *not* against the Mughals. Many old Maratha families, such as the Shirkes, the Morays, the Nimbalkars, the Ghatges, the Ghorpades, the Jadhavs, etc., had received grants and favours from the Deccani Muslim kings.[3] Even Shahji rose to prominence on account of the favour of the Ahmadnagar chief, Malik Ambar. The support given by some of the Maratha families to the rebel Shivaji cannot be explained by any changes in the religious policy of the Deccani rulers. Further, Shivaji hardly concerned himself with the welfare of Hindus outside Maharashtra. Nor did he undertake any social reforms in Hindu society within Maharashtra.[4] Though he assumed the title of *haindava-dharmoddharak* at the time of his coronation, it can only be regarded as a general appellation common to many Rajput princes of the time. He did, in a general way, promise to protect cows and brahmins, and to uphold Hindu *dharma* in his territories. This, again, was not a new departure. Thus, neither the religious policy of Aurangzeb nor of Shivaji adequately explain the rise of the Maratha movement.

Little space needs to be devoted to show that like many other military adventurers of the time, both Shahji and Shivaji were primarily interested in carving out large principalities for themselves. The disintegration of the Ahmadnagar state and the slow expansion of Mughal power over the Deccan after the death of Akbar provided the necessary opportunity to ambitious military adventurers. Of these, both Shahji and Shivaji were conspicuously successful, due in large part to their personal qualities as commanders and leaders of men. Again, this by it-

[3]According to tradition, there were 96 leading Maratha families at the time of Shivaji. However, this figure appears to have little reality. Enthoven says: '*Asal* Marathas claim to belong to four main branches or *vanshas* each containing twenty-four *kuls* of families. These are: (1) *Brahmvansha* or the brahmin branch, (2) *Sheshavansha* or the serpent branch, (3) *Somavansha* or the moon branch, (4) *Suryavansha* or the sun branch. This classification has evidently been adopted from the mythological division of the Kshatriya race in support of their claim to Kshatriya origin. But it has not been possible to assign definitely to each branch the twenty-four families attributed to it, neither are the names of the ninety-six families or *kuls* the same in all places. In fact many of the names disclose identity with the Kunbis, whom the aristocratic Marathas consider to be distinct from them.' R.E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vol. III, pp. 19-20.

[4]See J.N. Sarkar, *Shivaji*, pp. 353-9.

self can hardly be regarded as an adequate explanation for the manner in which Shivaji, in particular, was able to conjure into being a movement which had every semblance of mass support, and which continued to work itself out for almost a hundred years.

In recent times, attempts have been made to portray Shivaji's movement as a Maratha nationalist movement.[5] The development of a nationalist movement often presumes foreign occupation. Even if, for the sake of argument, we accept that the Mughals were foreigners in South India, it would be difficult to show that the states of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur were any less foreign. If the Marathas could accept the rule of the latter, why not Mughal rule? Nor do we find in Maharashtra at this time, any strong middle class which is generally associated with the rise of a national movement. Even if we postulate the Marathas as possessing the wherewithal of a nation and envisage Shivaji's movement as an embryonic stage in the development of a Maratha nation, its specific forms and social content would still have to be investigated.

Hardly any attention has been paid so far towards analysing the social content of Shivaji's policies. It has been argued that Shivaji was able to rally the peasants to his side because he discontinued the *zamindari* and *jagirdari* systems and established direct relations with the peasants in his system of revenue administration.[6] A detailed study of Shivaji's administration and policies reveals that these contentions are largely invalid.[7]

As discussed earlier Sabhasad nowhere ascribes to Shivaji any intention of doing away with *zamindari* or superior rights in land. Elsewhere he does say that *mokasa* was not to be granted to any one. But it is clear that this is a hyperbole, for at more than one place Sabhasad mentions the grant of *mokasa* by Shivaji.[8] The contemporary work, *Ajnapatra*, is very forthright on this matter. While advocating caution in alienating revenue-bearing lands from hereditary holders (*watandars*) it says, 'existing *watans* should be continued...whatever has been in

[5]See for instance, V.V. Joshi, *Clash of Three Empires*.

[6]See S.N. Sen, *Administrative System*, pp. 25-30; G.S. Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. III, p. 56; Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 351; V.T. Gune, *Judicial System*, p. 30; M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power*, pp. 68-70, etc.

[7]See Chapter VIII.

[8]*Sabhasad*, pp. 21, 23, 27-8, 55 *el. seq.* See Chapter IX.

their possession from the past should not be allowed to increase even a little, nor should it be reduced even by a fraction.' It goes on to say, 'It is a sin to resume a *vritti* (*watan*) howsoever small it may be.'[9]

Against this background, it is clear that rather than seeking to abolish the hereditary rights of this powerful class, which would have imposed insurmountable difficulties, Shivaji tried to make the old system work better by purging some of its worst abuses, and establishing the necessary supervisory authorities, backed by a strong central government. It is not possible to trace in the present paper the various stages in Shivaji's relations with various sections of the Maratha landed elements, called *watandars*. Some features of his policy, however, are important in understanding the social motivations of Shivaji. There is a strong tradition that the *deshmukhs* of the Maval were the first to rally to Shivaji's side. These petty landholders were often at the mercy of bigger landholders of the area such as the Morays of Javli, the Khopdes of Utroli, the Nimbalkars of Phaltan who, in turn, were closely allied to the Muslim rulers of Bijapur. In the first instance, therefore, Shivaji's actions were directed against these bigger *deshmukhs*, many of whom he overcame by force of arms, and compelled either to submit to him or lose their lands. In any case, Shivaji did not trust these bigger *deshmukhs*. He therefore tried to restrict their power by destroying or taking away their forces and strongholds, and limiting the number of their armed retainers. It is significant that the backbone of Shivaji's army did not consist of feudal levies led by the bigger *deshmukhs* but comprised broadly of: one, cavalrymen and soldiers directly recruited and paid by Shivaji and second, a loose body of auxiliaries called *bargirs* who were under the control of their own *sardars*, and were paid irregularly, making up the balance by foraging and plundering.[10]

From the foregoing it would appear that the small and middle *watandars* stood to benefit most by Shivaji's attempts to curb the overgrown power of the bigger *deshmukhs*, and by his policy of giving help and encouragement to the extension and improvement of cultivation in the areas under his control. In the agreement (*qualnama*) arrived at between the *deshmukhs* of

[9] *Ajnapatra, Prakarna* VI, VII.

[10] *Sabhasad*, pp. 24-7.

Rohidkhore and Annaji Datto, the chief revenue official of Shivaji, the *deshmukhs* were assigned the responsibility of assessing and collecting land revenue under the overall control of the revenue department.[11] Simultaneously, Shivaji tried to raise the position of his family in the social scale by entering into matrimonial relations with the leading *deshmukh* families, such as the Shirkes, the Morays, and the Nimbalkars.

A definite stage in this dual process of fighting the bigger *deshmukh* at the political and military level while staking a claim for social equality with them, was arrived at by 1674 when Shivaji had himself formally crowned as an independent sovereign. The coronation not only implied that Shivaji could deal with the rulers of Bijapur and Golconda on an equal footing, and not as a rebel or another *deshmukh*;[12] it simultaneously established the social superiority of Shivaji by having a leading brahmin of Benaras, Gaga Bhat, anoint him king and formally recognise his claim to be a high class kshatriya. However, all the brahmins were not convinced. After a prolonged controversy, the hereditary estate of their family priests was resumed by the descendents of Shivaji since they refused to accept them as kshatriyas.[13] Shivaji not only had a geneology prepared linking him with the ancient solar (*surya-vansi*) kshatriya families of India, but emphasised his claim by proudly assuming the title of *kshatriya kulavatamsa* or 'the ornament of kshatriya families'. Armed with these, Shivaji claimed the *sardeshmukhi* rights over the Deccan exclusively for himself, although earlier these rights had been granted by the rulers of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur to a number of leading Maratha families, such as the Shirkes, Ghatges, etc.[14]

This brings us to the social tensions prevalent in Maratha society at the time. The Marathas formed the fighting class in Maharashtra and also engaged themselves in agriculture. Like

[11]Quoted by Rajwade, in *MIS*, Vol. VI, pp. 268-70. See also Annaji Datto's circular assessment, quoted in Rajwade, *MIS*, Vol. XX, pp. 94-6.

[12]In a letter addressed to Baji Ghorpade of Mudhol, written in March 1677, Shivaji emphasises that as an independent ruler, he could talk to the Qutb Shah of Golconda on a footing of equality. (*Shivaji Souvenir*, p. 146; Sardesai, *New History*, Vol. 1, pp. 240-1).

[13]Iravati Karve, *Maharashtra: Land and Its People* (Bombay, 1968), pp. 76-7.

[14]See Chapter IX.

the Jats in North India, their position in the *varna* system was ambivalent. Even as late as the early part of the nineteenth century, the Marathas as a whole were not accepted as kshatriyas by the brahmins.[15] Duff says, 'The term (Maratha), though extended to the Koonbees, or cultivators, is in strictness, confined to the military families of the country, many of whom claim a doubtful but not improbable descent from the Rajpoots.'[16] Even more interesting for the social historian is the Kunbi-Maratha syndrome. Duff classified the Kunbis as shudras.[17] But there was no clear line of demarcation between a Maratha cultivator and a Kunbi. According to Enthoven, 'the word Kunbi, like Rajpoot, denotes a status and not a caste, and may be compared in this respect with the latter term which has no necessary ethnic significance. The fact that the Maratha Kunbis are to a great extent homogeneous is clearly due primarily to their being Marathas and not their being Kunbis.' He goes on to explain that the clan names borne by the Marathas are derived either from the Rajput clan names or from the ancient ruling houses in the Deccan, or from the Kunbis.[18] Iravati Karve says: 'These names, however, are borne not only by the descendents of historical families but also by humble cultivators. Among the Marathas there are many who believe that they, and the Kunbis of their region, belong to a common stock.'[19]

It would thus appear that a dual process was at work. Aristocratic Maratha families, such as that of Shivaji, were claiming the status of high class Rajputs or kshatriyas. This claim was not acceptable to the leading Rajput rajas. Thus, Mirza Raja Jai Singh considered Shivaji to belong to a low caste and that he could not eat food touched by him, much less enter into matrimonial relations with him.[20] However in the Mughal *chehra* documents of Shah Jahan's period, the Deccani Maratha troop-

[15]In fact, as late as the early part of the twentieth century, brahmin writers such as Rajwade and Bijapurkar referred to Shivaji's descendents as shudras. (Sarkar, *Shivaji*, p. 359 f.n.)

[16]Duff, *Mahrattas*, Vol. I, p. 17.

[17]Ibid., p. 12.

[18]Enthoven, *Tribes and Caste*, Vol. II, p. 284; Vol. III, pp. 19-20.

[19]Iravati Karve, *Maharashtra*, p. 30; *Kinship Organisation in India* (3rd edn., Bombay, 1968), p. 175.

[20]*Haft Anjuman*, Sarkar Collection, f. 139a.

ers are classified as Rajputs.[21] From this it may be concluded that the *varna* status of the Marathas was in doubt during the period.

The movement launched by Shivaji was a powerful means of welding the Marathas and the Kunbis together. Many of the Kunbi peasants who rallied to the standard of Shivaji by the lure of loot, were also motivated by the prospect of rising in the social scale by becoming Marathas in due course. The Kolis and other tribal elements belonging to the Maval area, who were the first to rally to Shivaji's standard, were in a similar position in relation to both the Kunbis and the Marathas. Thus we are told that a Koli taking to settled agriculture may become a Maratha Kunbi.[22]

Thus the Maratha movement should not be regarded merely as a political movement aimed at the overthrow of an oppressive 'foreign' government and the establishment of an independent state. It had as its background a deep-seated ferment within Maratha society. One aspect of it was struggle for control over land. This involved various elements—the bigger *deshmukhs*, the middle and smaller *deshmukhs*, the *mirasis* (resident owner cultivators) and *uparis* (outsiders). The gradations between these were not sharp enough to divide them into watertight compartments. Instead of making for social stability, this only engendered greater jealousy and conflict. The possession and augmentation of one's *watan* (hereditary right, either over land or an office of profit), was an all absorbing passion. To this was joined the struggle for social status and political authority. All these interacted with each other—social status and political authority depended in a large measure on control over land and in turn, helped to consolidate and augment it. The intellectual or ideological framework was provided by the Bhakti movement which crystallised into the *Maharasthra Dharma*. While unable to make a dent in the *varna* and caste system, its stress on egalitarianism provided a justification for mobility in the *varna* scale by individuals and groups. The ability of Shivaji to weld together different sections of Marathas, and to form an alliance with other deprived and

[21] *Chehra Documents*, Andhra State Archives.

[22] Duff, *Mahrattas*, ed., S.M. Edwards, Vol. I, xliv. See also W. Crooke, (*J.R. Anth.*, Vol. XL, 1910) on the relation of Marathas and that of Rajputs, Jats and Gujars; Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes*, Vol., 1, pp. xviii-.xix.

depressed communities such as the Kayasthas, the Kunbis and Kolis, provided the real driving force of this movement. The social composition of the Maratha army as late as the middle of the eighteenth century was an index of this.[23] Also, the manner in which persons of humble social origin, such as the Sindhia, could rise to the highest position exemplifies the movement.

The manner in which different sections of the ruling class—the old elite and the new aspiring elite—behaved and reacted is also of considerable interest. Above all, the Maratha movement provides a case study of the manner in which within the framework of traditional Hindu society, sizeable groups and communities could rise in the social scale, improve their *varna* status, and legitimise their right to exercise political power.

[23] '... most of the men in the Mahratta army are unendowed with the excellence of illustrious birth, and husbandmen, carpenters and shopkeepers abound among their soldiery.' This is contrasted to the soldiers of Hind who are 'effeminate' but 'who for the most part are of more honourable birth and calling.' Ali Ibrahim Khan, *Tarikh-i-Ibrahim Khan*, in Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India*, Vol., VIII, pp. 262-3.

XI

Commercial Activities of the Mughal Emperors during the Seventeenth Century

THE COMMERCIAL activities of the Mughal emperors and their nobility is a subject which has not yet received the attention it deserves from students of medieval Indian history. It has sometimes been assumed that the interests of the Mughal emperors and nobles in trade, particularly foreign trade, was largely confined to the procuring of rare and costly articles, and to the ensuring of a regular supply of Arab and Iraqi horses for their armed forces and for purposes of display. Already in the time of Akbar, the importance of trade, and the possibilities of making profits in commercial ventures and speculation, and thus supplementing the income from the *jagirs* had been realised by some of the more farsighted observers. Thus Abul Fazl remarks:

> When an appropriate means of maintenance is secured, it is a requisite condition of economy to husband a portion of one's means, provided that the household is not thereby straitened. The proper control of an estate is conditional on the expenditure being less than the income; it is permitted to indulge a little in commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings, reserving a part in goods and wares, and somewhat invested in the speculation of others, and yet a portion in lands and immoveable estates, and a share may be entrusted to borrowers of credit.

Published in *Bengal: Past and Present*, Vol. LXXXVII, July-Dec. 1959, pp. 92-7.

Abul Fazl further says, 'Let such a one be frank in his commercial dealings and give no place in his heart to self-reproach.'[1]

The determination of the extent to which commercial profit formed a supplementary source of income for the ruling sections in the Mughal empire during the seventeenth century is important not only for a fuller understanding of the social and economic history of the period. The problem has to be studied as a background to the crisis of the Mughal empire in the second half of the seventeenth century. This crisis, which had many aspects in the economic sphere, took the shape of an absolute shortage of lands available for assigning as *jagirs* to the nobles, and of a wide divergence between the real and paper incomes of the *jagirs*. The extent to which this crisis induced the nobles to turn towards commercial activities, and was a factor in the renewed expansion of the Mughal empire towards the south and in the clash with various sections such as the Rajputs, Marathas, Jats, etc., has to be determined on the basis of a concrete study. The present writer has been engaged in studying some of these aspects. The purpose of this essay is to call attention to the direct participation of the Mughal emperors and members of the royal family in trade, particularly sea-borne trade, during the seventeenth century as one aspect of the commercial activities of the upper classes during this period.

From scattered references in the English records, it would appear that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, Prince Khurram and even the Queen Mother owned ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. While Khurram was Viceroy of Gujarat, his ships carried on an extensive trade with Mocha, carrying mostly broad cloth and textiles, but were not averse to carrying even tobacco when no broad

[1] *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr., Jarrett, 2nd edn., pp. 57-8. Compare the earlier outlook represented by Barani in his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*: '... whenever plenty of profit is seen in regrating and selling at high prices and not much profit remains in other professions people discard their own professions by an instinct of nature. Soldiers take to agriculture; cultivators, seeing plenty of profit in it, take to trade; regrators, owing to the influence of their wealth, extend their hand to high posts; shopkeepers try to become officers; men of noble birth become merchants; and transport-merchants desire to become *amirs* and *sar-i-khail*.' *Advice*, IX; published under the title *Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanat*, eds., M. Habib and Afsar Jehan Begum (Allahabad, n.d.,).

cloth was available. His ships also went to Masulipatam which was one of the principal ports of South India at this period and carried textiles and gum-lac to the Persian ports.[2] Another commodity in which the prince traded during this period was indigo.[3] An example of his trade in textiles with the English might be quoted.

In 1621, the English factory at Cambay contracted with Khizr Khan and the prince's broker for the supply of goods to Mocha amounting to one lakh of *mahmudis*, a fourth part of which was to be delivered at Baroda, and the rest at the Cambay ports. The goods apparently consisted of '*baftas* and *buckar*' which subsequently fell in short supply and the original contract could not be fulfilled.[4]

During the same period, Jahangir's junks plied between Mocha and Goga. In 1622, the English, with a view to putting pressure on the Mughal emperor to open the Red Sea trade to them, seized a number of Indian ships returning from Mocha, including one of which 'the shippes and goods only belonged to the King, the Normall (Nur Mahal), Assafcon (Asaf Khan), Suffichan (Safi Khan), and other greatte men'.[5] Jahangir also seems to have invested money in the Cambay trade.[6]

[1] *Letters Received by the East India Company*, 1615, ed., W. Foster, Vol. III (London, 1897), p. 270; *The English Factories in India*, 1618-21, ed., W. Foster (Oxford, 1914), pp. 92, 106, 113, 177, 240, 328; 1622-23, pp. 273 *et seq.* Sir Thomas Roe, writing from Ajmer, thought that the prince's opposition to the English trade with the Red Sea ports was due to the fact that 'Coronne himself had a ship to send to the Red Sea and was willing to wink, yea, to encourage his ministers to molest and hinder the despatch of our fleet until his ship were clear' (*Letters Received*, Vol. IV, pp. 13-14). The English subsequently realised that the Mughal opposition to their trade with the Red Sea ports was due to the general opposition of the Indian merchants who had already suffered heavily by the encroachment of the English on the trade to Achin, Bantam, etc., and hence depended almost exclusively upon the Red Sea Trade (*English Factories*, 1618-21, p. xiii).

[2] Thus, when Prince Shah Jahan rebelled against his father, all his goods were seized, including his junks and his indigo which was 'sould by armfulls' (*English Factories*, 1622-23, pp. 218, 233).

[3] Ibid., pp. 148, 149, 152, 168. The approximate value of the *mahmudi* was five-ninths of a rupee.

[4] Ibid., pp. 204, 264, 271, 272.

[5] Thus, in 1622, Jahangir 'sent to Cambay two lakhs of rupees to be invested in the goods for the Red Sea, the proceeds of which were to be given to the poor at Mecca. *English Factories*, 1622-23, pp. 144, 171.

The queens also invested in trade and even had junks of their own. We are told that Jahangir's mother was 'a great adventurer', and that the seizure of her ship 'Remewe' (*Rahimi*) by the Portuguese in 1614 was one cause of Jahangir's war on the Portuguese settlements.[7] However, at about the same period we find Nur Jahan, and other Mughal nobles trading from the Portuguese settlements of Daman and Diu.[8]

When Shah Jahan ascended the throne, he continued to take interest in overseas trade. His ships, the 'Fettee' (*Fath*), and the 'Shahe' (*Shahi*) went to the Red Sea ports, while at least another went to Achin (Sumatra) in 1636.[9] Official pressure was sometimes used to procure cargo for these ships from the merchants. Thus in 1643, the Governor of Swally Marine prohibited merchants, under great penalties, from loading any vessel 'untill both the great junkes belonging to this king are full'. On occasions, the English were forced to convey the king's ships, or to carry his goods on their ships.[10]

Another method adopted by Shah Jahan for augmenting his income was to create monopolies. Thus, according to the English factor at Agra, in 1633 a contract was made between the emperor and one '*Munnodas Dunda*' by which the latter was granted the sole right of buying all indigo grown in the kingdom, and in return was to pay at the end of three years eleven lakhs of rupees, or rupees two lakhs a year out of his profits, and rupees five lakhs as repayment of the loan which had been made to him from the royal treasury. It was also stipulated that if the indigo remained unsold, he was to be excused all payment to the king except the repayment of the loan. The English and the Dutch were apprehensive that this would result in a rise in the price of indigo, and hence entered into an agreement not to buy any indigo except at their own price. The result was that the monopoly

[7] *Letters Received.*, 1613-15, p. 213.

[8] *English Factories*, 1622-23, p. 81 (customs paid to Portuguese by Nur Jahan's junk). The English were indignant at the trade of the Mughal nobles with the Portuguese, and Thomas Roe from Agra advised seizing their goods, and 'show ourselves a little rough and busye' so that they 'feare to freight in the Portugalls and rather offer themselves to us.' *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe* (Hakluyt Society, 1899), p. 506.

[9] *Factory Records: Surat*, Vol. I, pp. 134, 526; *English Factories*, 1634-36, p. 255.

[10] *English Factories*, 1641-45, pp. 10, 90, 91, 69, 101, 253.

failed and had to be wound up by the emperor after about one year.

It would appear that the emperor was not to have been the only beneficiary from this monopoly. According to the advice received by the English, 'Manoardas' bore the name of the prime monopolist, yet 'Meir Jombolo (Mir Jumla), High Steward to the king, was principally ingaged in the project.'[11]

Tavernier mentions another kind of royal monopoly. He says, 'All the waggons which come to Surat from Agra or other places in the empire, and return to Agra and Jahanabad, are compelled to carry lime which comes from Broach, and which, as soon as it is used, becomes as hard as marble. It is a great source of profit to the emperor who sends it where he pleasure.'[12]

Another commodity which was frequently sought to be 'engrossed' or monopolised was saltpetre. As an ingredient of gunpowder, saltpetre was apparently regarded a vital commodity. Its export from Gujarat was forbidden by Shah Jahan in 1630, and this ban was later reiterated by Prince Aurangzeb as Viceroy of Gujarat. Mandelso says that foreigners were not allowed to export gun-powder, lead and saltpetre except with the governor's permission.[13] However, the English were able to export fairly large quantities from Surat, and later Patna which soon became the main centre of the saltpetre trade. The trade was a very profitable one, and the king, the princes, and provincial governors often traded extensively in it.[14]

An interesting development in Shah Jahan's reign was the

[11]*English Factories*, 1630-33, pp. 324-8; 1634-36, pp. 72, 138. *The Dagh Register* gives the price of the monopoly as Rs 400, 000. The text of the *farman* dissolving the monopoly is given in *Hague Transcripts*, Series I, Vol. X, No. 324.

[12]Tavernier, *Travels in India*, tr., V. Ball, ed., W. Crooke, Vol. I (London, 1925), p. 35.

[13]Edward Terry, ed., *The Voyages and Travels of John Albert de Mandelso into the East Indies*, tr., J. Davies (London, 1662), p. 28; *English Factories*, 1630-33, p. 21; 1646-50, pp. 34 *et seq.* See also J.N. Sarkar's article 'Saltpetre Industry in the Seventeenth Century in India', *IHQ*, 1937, pp. 319-50.

[14]Thus, the royal official stored up 10,000 double maunds of refined saltpetre in Ahmadabad in 1655, evidently with the object of forcing up the price. Two years later, Prince Murad Bakhsh attempted to monopolise its sale in Gnjarat. Shaista Khan as Governor of Bihar, did the same. *English Factories*, 1655-60, pp. 121, 299, 300; 1661-64, pp. 395-6, 402 *et seq.*

granting to traders, both European and Indian, of loans from the mint and the local treasury for their business. Thus, Muizz-ul-Mulk, the Mughal Governor of Surat, Broach and Cambay advanced to the English in 1637, Rs 20,000 or Rs 30,000 from the mint and the governor's treasury, and this sum was forwarded by the English by exchange to Agra. In 1646, the English factors complained of shortage of money at Surat, for as soon as money was coined, the merchants at Surat paid it to the king's diwan in satisfaction of advances made by him.[15]

It is not clear if this was done with the emperor's sanction—it is scarcely possible to imagine that it could have been otherwise —and what interest was charged on such loans.[16]

Princess Jahanara also had ships of her own, and carried on extensive commerce with the help of the Dutch and the English.[17]

As the governor of Thatta, Prince Dara carried on an extensive trade with the Red Sea ports. In 1647, his agent the *Shahbandar* of Thatta, contracted to buy two new ships from the Portuguese on his behalf for the Red Sea trade.[18] Of interest is another statement that one of the prince's ships came to Thatta direct from Congo, not touching at Muscat at all.[19]

Emperor Aurangzeb owned a fleet of ships which plied mainly to the Red Sea ports. Some idea of the numbers and tonnage of Aurangzeb's shipping interests may be formed by the request made by English factors in 1663, asking for ten or fifteen anchors for the supply of the king's junks. The request for ten anchors for the king's ships was repeated a few years later.[20] Even if each ship carried two anchors, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the king's fleet numbered at least five.

[15]Ibid., 1637-41, p. 193; 1646-50, p. 72.

[16]For interest on loans (*musaidat*) to nobles in the time of Akbar, see *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blochmann, pp. 275-6.

[17]*Dagh Register*, 1644-45, p. 256; *English Factories*, 1641-45, p. 148 (junk built for her).

[18]*Factory Records, Surat*, Vol. cii A, pp. 53, 142; *English Factories*, 1646-50, pp. 72, 90, 119.

[19]*English Factories*, 1646-50, p. 30.

[20]Ibid., 1661-64, p. 211; 1668-69, pp. 11-13. A letter from the English factor in 1660 alludes to 'the new King Orang Zeebe intending to lade two greate junckes this year from Surat *with his owne money*; besides other merchants lode one more of his juncks.' (Ibid., 1655-60, p. 302; 1661-64, p. 80. My emphasis).

As for the size of the royal ships, Moreland concluded that a 'large' ship or junk for sea-borne trade averaged less than 200 tons.[21] However, we learn that the Queen Mother's junk in 1613 was 1100 or 1200 tons, while of the two ships belonging to the king at the Surat port in 1668, 'the least of them was upward of 600 tonnes.'[22] However further evidence would be needed before some definite ideas can be formed of the average size of the royal junks.

It would appear that during the reign of Aurangzeb, the practice of provincial governors seeking to monopolise the trade in their provinces became fairly common. As the governor of Lahore, Wazir Khan got a commission on everything that was bought or sold at Lahore.[23] In Bengal, Mir Jumla, and following him Shaista Khan, attempted to monopolise the trade in all the important commodities.[24] Even princes of blood could not escape the lure of making easy profits in this manner. As the Viceroy of Bengal and Bihar, Prince Azim-ush-Shan declared the entire import trade to be his monopoly, styling this the *Sauda-i-Khas-o-am*. Aurangzeb wrote him a stinging reproof, and reduced his rank by 500 *sawar*.[25]

From the brief review above, it should be apparent that the Mughal emperors and members of the royal family continuously participated in commercial activities, particularly in the sea-borne trade to the Red Sea ports, and also, to some extent, with ports to the south of Surat up to Achin, and ports on the east coast of Africa. The royal ships not only carried goods purchased with the emperor's money, but also the goods of nobles and individual merchants. The king and members of his family also freighted their goods on the ships of individual nobles or merchants as well as on English, Portuguese and Danish ships.

[21]Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, pp. 231-2. For the size of the ton or tonnes in the seventeenth century, see ibid, pp. 310-12.

[22]*Letters Received*, Vol. II, p. 213; *English Factories*, 1768-69, pp. 11-13.

[23]Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasir-ul-Umara*, ed., Molvi Abdur Rahim, Calcutta, 1888, Vol. III, p. 939 (*Chun dar Lahore har kharid-o-farokhti ki mi-shud aksar az sarkar-i-u-bud zarhai bisyar andukht*).

[24]For the commercial activities of Mir Jumla in Bengal, see J.N. Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla* (Calcutta, 1951), pp. 216-18; for Shaista Khan's activities, see *English Factories*, 1661-64, pp. 395-6 *et. seq.*

[25]*Raqaim-i-Karaim*, Ms. Aligarh University Lib.; *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, Persian text, Maulvi Abdul Haq, ed. (Calcutta, 1890), pp. 243-4.

While the trade on behalf of the emperor and the princes was sometimes carried on by local officials, there is reference to the activities of their own agents and merchants. There is also some evidence of the participation of the emperors and members of the royal family in internal trade, particularly by way of creating monopolies.

Thus, there was an apparent growth of commercial interests and commercial morality among the upper sections of society including the Mughal emperors and members of the royal family during the seventeenth century. This feature did not come to an end with the collapse of the Mughal empire, but seems to have been in evidence as late as the close of the eighteenth century.[26]

[26]Thus, see *Calender of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. X, Nos. 706, 1659, 1914-15, 440, 1272, 1056 *et. seq.* (New Delhi, 1959). See also Intro., p. xxii.

XII

Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India during the Seventeenth Century

THE SEVENTEENTH and eighteenth centuries were crucial periods in the history of Asia. It was during this period that the European countries, having created a series of stable nation states, evolved the technology and institutions of an industrial society, and began the process of the colonial domination of Asia and the rest of the world—a process that was far different from the conquest and colonisation of the New World by Spain and Portugal during the earlier period. In order to understand the processes and methods of colonial rule in different parts of Asia, and their impact on society in those parts, it is necessary to study carefully the deeper trends that were at work in different societies prior to their conquest and domination by the western powers.

The evolution of society in India during the seventeenth century was shaped by two major developments. The first was the rise and consolidation within its territory of a powerful, centralised empire in the shape of the Mughal empire. The political forms evolved by the Mughal rulers, their domestic policies—particularly in the sphere of agriculture and commerce—and the character and deeper urges of the ruling classes under the aegis of the Mughal emperors gave a definite direction to social evolution in the country. The second factor was the establishment

Paper read at the First Asian History Congress, New Delhi, 1961; revised edn., published in *IESHR*, Vol. III, No. 4, 1966, pp. 321-31, and the unrevised paper also in *Studies in Asian History*, ed., K.S. Lal (Bombay, 1969), pp. 368-77.

of European trading agencies (called 'factories') at various port towns and inland centres, and the linking of India more closely than before with the markets of Europe. During the seventeenth century, the activities of the Europeans helped in expanding the demand for certain types of goods, which included a considerable proportion of handicrafts and manufactures, and initially, at any rate, did not constitute a menace to the established Indian trade.[1]

It is not our intention here to attempt to analyse in detail the various aspects of the impact upon Indian society of the two factors mentioned above, but to draw attention to an important feature, viz., the trend towards the growth of a money economy in India during the seventeenth century as a result of these and other factors.

It is necessary to emphasise that before the establishment of Mughal rule and the arrival in strength of European traders in India, the Indian economy was by no means a simple natural subsistence economy.[2]

India had a considerable inland as well as foreign trade with countries both to her west and east since early times.[3] An advanced urban culture had developed at many centres, leading to the displacement of the traditional idea that warfare and agriculture were the only two noble professions worth following.[4] There was

[1]English trade in India during the seventeenth century has been studied by a number of writers, notably Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*; Bal Krishna, *Commercial Relations between India and England*; Shafaat Ahmad Khan, *The East India Trade in the Seventeenth century*, and T. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel (1605-1690)*.

[2]This point has been brought out by more fully Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, published since this paper was read.

[3]R.C. Majumdar, ed., *Age of Imperial Unity* (Bombay 1951), pp. 599-607. See also Dr Moti Chand, *Sarthavaha* (Patna, 1953).

[4]The prevalent social outlook during the early centuries of the Christian era when trade and manufacture was expanding is reflected in a number of Sanskrit works, notably the *Panchatantra* (*c.* 5th Cent. A.D.) a work compiled, to teach practical morality to princes and members of the urban upper strata. In the Introduction to the work, of all the professions, business is considered the best, and in business the import and export of goods the most profitable (ed., G.P. Shastri, 3rd edn, Kashi, *v.s.* 1997, pp. 9-11). See also *Ain-i-Akbari* (Blochmann, p. 4) where artificers and merchants are put next in importance to warriors, and above learned men. This may be compared to a popular saying current in the medieval period, rating agriculture as the best profession and commerce next to it (*Uttam kheti madhyam ban, nich chakri bhikha nidan*). This perhaps reflects the outlook of

considerable specialisation in handicrafts manufacture, particularly of textiles and metal-work of various types at numerous centres in the country. A number of cash crops, such as sugarcane, oilseeds, cotton, indigo, etc., were produced in fair quantities. Nevertheless, the growth of a money economy was limited by a number of factors. The villages were largely self-sufficient obtaining only a minimum of their requirements from outside; trade moved only between the large towns, and was further restricted by the high cost of transport, bad roads and, frequently, absence of law and order in many parts. The amount of surplus, particularly cash surplus at the disposal of the ruling class was another limiting factor. The major source of this surplus was the peasantry. Broadly speaking, income from this source was inelastic, and was restricted by customary law, political considerations, social factors, etc. Also, it was the general practice in the ancient and early medieval, i.e., the pre-Mughal period for land revenue to be paid in kind rather than in cash.

In general, all these factors continued to operate in the seventeenth century also. However, a number of developments suggest that some new forces were at work in society. One of these was the rapid expansion of towns during the period. Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Ahmadabad, Surat and Dacca in northern India expanded rapidly during the period. These cities compared with the largest cities in the world at the time. Bernier said that Delhi was not much less than Paris and that Agra was larger than Delhi. Ralph Fitch said that Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were each much greater than London. Monserrate says the same thing regarding Lahore.[5] Similar testimony is forthcoming regarding Ahmedabad, Patna and Dacca.[6] Britain during the same period

a prolonged period of commercial stagnation particularly in northern India between the eighth and twelfth centuries, or it may be a continuation of an earlier tradition. (Cf. remarks of Professor M. Habib, Introduction to Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. II, 2nd edn., pp. 36-68.)

[5]Bernier, *Travels*, p. 252; Ralph Fitch, *The First Englishman in India*, ed., Foster (London, 1921), p. 103; Monserrate, *Commentarius*, tr., Hoyland (London, 1922), p. 159. See also *Akbar Namah*, tr., Beveridge (Calcutta, 1907-39), Vol. II, p. 86.

[6]Withington says 'Ahmedabad was near as great as London.' See also De Laet, *Description of India and Fragment of Indian History*, tr., J.S. Hoyland (Bombay, 1923), p. 19; *Letters Received*, ed., W. Foster, Vol. I, p. 305; Fitch, *First Englishman*, p. 113; N. Manucci, tr., Irvine, *Storia do Mogor* (London, 1907-8), p. 83.

is not known to have had any other town of the size of London, and in France, the position of Paris was not far different. A recent study[7] shows that the number of towns in North India with a population of (a) 50,000 and above; (b) between 20,000-50,000 and (c) above 10,000 but below 20,000 was much larger than has hitherto been suspected. In fact, from this study it may be concluded that bearing in mind the population of India during the Mughal period,[8] the percentage of people living in towns during the seventeenth century was much larger than towards the end of the nineteenth century. The growth of towns was attended by another characteristic feature—flight of the peasants from land to urban centres. This phenomenon has been commented upon by a number of contemporary observers[9] and there are repeated references to it in the Persian literature of the period also.[10] It may be attributed not alone to the pauperisation of the peasantry consequent on the growing pressure of the state, but also to the lure of better living conditions and cash wages in the developing cities.

A second feature of the seventeenth century was the growing commercial mindedness of the Mughal nobility. Like all ruling classes which drew their income mainly from land, the early Turkish nobility in India looked down upon commerce. From a remark of Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* it appears that this had undergone a rapid change by the end of the sixteenth century. Abul Fazl considered it permissible for a noble 'to indulge a little in commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings, reserving a portion in goods and wares, and somewhat invested in the speculation of others.' Abul Fazl disregards

[7]Ishwar Prakash Gupta, *Urban Life of Northern India during the Seventeenth Century*, unpublished thesis, Aligarh Muslim University Library, 1958.

[8]Moreland has estimated the population of India at the beginning of the sixteenth century at a hundred million (*India at the Death of Akbar*, pp. 9-22). For the population of India during the nineteenth century, see *Census of India*, 1871, 1891.

[9]Thus, Bernier, *Travels*, p. 227; Hawkins, *Early Travels*, ed., Foster, p. 114; S. Manrique, *Travels*, tr., C.E. Luard and H. Foster (Oxford, Hakluyt Society, 1927) Vol. II, p. 372; St. Xavier, tr., Foster, *JASB*, N.S. XXIII, 1927, p. 121.

[10]See *farman* of Aurangzeb addressed to Rasikh Das Krori, tr., Sarkar, *Mughal Administration*, 4th edn., pp. 190-8. See also, Irfan Habib, 'Agrarian Causes of the Fall of the Mughal Empire', Vol. II, *Enquiry*, 1959, pp. 81-99.

the Islamic ban on the taking of interest, saying that 'a share may be entrusted to borrowers of credit'. 'Let such a one be frank in his commercial dealings,' he says, 'and give no place in his heart to self-reproach.'[11]

A study of the European and Persian sources for the seventeenth century shows that it was fairly common for both nobles and members of the royal family including kings, princes, princesses and ladies of the *harem* to engage in commercial ventures. Thus, Jahangir, Nur Jahan, prince Khurram (Shah Jahan), and even Akbar's widow, the mother of Jahangir, owned ships which plied between Surat and the Red Sea ports. While Shah Jahan was Viceroy of Gujarat his ships carried on extensive trade in broad cloth, textile, gum-lac, indigo and even tobacco.[12] Shah Jahan continued these activities after his accession to the throne. Later on, we find that Princess Jahanara had ships of her own, and also freighted her goods in Dutch and English ships. Dara and Aurangzeb also owned a fleet of ships which traded with the Red Sea ports and Africa. Ships were owned by prominent nobles such as Asaf Khan, Safi Khan, Mir Jumla, etc., also.[13] As the Governor of Lahore, Wazir Khan got a commission on everything that was bought and sold at Lahore. In Bengal, Mir Jumla, and following him Shaista Khan attempted to monopolise trade in all important commodities. Mir Jumla owned a fleet of ships, and carried on extensive commerce with Burma, Maccassar and Maldives, Persia, Arabia, etc.[14] Nor was it only the prominent nobles who indulged in commercial speculation. The English factor at Surat wrote in 1614: 'And as the people of this country of all sorts pretend to love us, so I am sure they will fear

[11] *Ain-i-Akbari*, tr., Jarett, 2nd edn., pp. 57-8. This may be compared with the earlier outlook represented by Barani in the *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, '... whenever plenty of profit is seen in regrating and selling at high prices people discard their own professions by an instinct of nature.... Shopkeepers try to become officers, men of noble birth become merchants and transport merchants desire to become *Amirs* and *Sar-i-khail*.' Advice IX, *MIQ*, Vol. III, Nos. 1 and 2, p. 54.

[12] *Letters Received*, ed., W. Foster, Vol. III, 1615, p. 270. *English Factories in India*, ed., W. Foster, 1618-21, pp. 92, 106, 113, 117, 240, 325; 1662-23, p. 273 *et. seq.*

[13] Ibid. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter XII.

[14] For the commercial activities of Mir Jumla, see J.N. Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, pp. 44-5 *et. seq.*

us concerning their seas, for great and small are merchants.'[15]

Commercial speculation by the nobles seems to have become so common by the middle of the seventeenth century that we even find a religious divine, Qazi Abdul Wahab, clandestinely carrying on trade through some merchants.[16]

It was fairly common for nobles, both high and low, to freight their goods on the ships of one or another of the European nations, and also, though more rarely, to lend them money.[17] A few instances are on record of money from the royal mint and treasures having been loaned out with or without the emperor's permission.[18] The full extent of all such commercial activities by the nobles has to be carefully gleaned from the contemporary Persian accounts and the English, Portuguese and Dutch records.

It would thus appear that the Mughal ruling class was becoming more and more commerce minded. While income from land still remained its main source of income, commerce or money extorted from commerce was becoming an important secondary source. The practice of escheat or claiming the goods, moveable, and immoveable of their servants by the Mughal emperors did not hinder the accumulation of large personal fortunes by the nobles, and their passing them on to their descendants.[19] At least a part of this wealth was, presumably, invested in business or given on interest. Another source of income was investment in urban property such as shops, markets (*puras*), *sarais*, etc. Almost for the first time, an urban, leisured class living on rents from urban

[15]*Letters Received*, ed., W. Foster, Vol. II, 1613-15, p. 246 (William Edwards to Sir Thomas Smith).

[16]*Maasir-ul-Umara*, Vol. I, pp. 235-41.

[17]Thus, see *Letters Received*, ed., W. Foster, Vol, II. 1613-15, pp. 138, 151, 239, 258, 298; Vol. III, 1615, p. 270. *Waqai Sarkar Ajmer wa Ranthambor*, Aligarh Muslim Univ. Lib., pp. 26-7, 32; *English Factories*, ed., W. Foster, 1646-50, p. 72: 'As fast as money is coined the merchants here (Surat) pay it to the king's diwan in satisfaction of advances made by him.'

[18]Thus, in 1639, Muizz-ul-Mulk, the Mughal Governor of Surat, Broach and Cambay, promised to lend the English Rs 20, 000-Rs 30, 000 from the mint and the governor's treasury, which the English proposed to remit from Ahmedabad to Agra by exchange (*hundi*). *English Factories*, ed., W. Foster, 1637-41, p. 193.

[19]Regarding the working of the escheat system, see M. Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, pp.63-88.

property was coming into existence.[20] Land, too, was beginning be to an object of sale and purchase.[21] The growth of a market in land is attested to by a large number of extant documents, and shows the unmistakable trend towards the growth of a money economy.

To what extent was the growth of a money economy compatible with the traditional economic isolation or self-sufficiency of the Indian village? A clear answer to this vexed question cannot be given in the present state of our historical knowledge. The study of the forms of village organisation in India remains a big desideratum for a proper understanding of the evolution of Indian society. Paucity of source material for the period prior to the British conquest had hitherto remained one of the biggest stumbling blocks for such studies. However, for the seventeenth century, a mass of records relating to the agrarian system exist in Persian, Rajasthani and Marathi. A systematic study of these records should help to throw a great deal of light on the economic organisation and trend of development of the villages in various areas. Till then, only some tentative suggestions can be made. It seems that while there were certain basic similarities in the organisation of Indian village society, the existence of considerable regional and local variations should not be lost sight of. The size and internal composition of the population of a village, its geographical situation including such factors as proximity to a town or sea port, etc., and the location and distribution of specialised branches of the handicrafts industry in particular regions could and did affect the internal life of villages. Thus, in some villages, such as those inhabited by the 'higher' castes who did not touch the plough, there would be a higher proportion of wage labourers or semi-serfs. Some of the villages specialised in certain crafts and produced not only for local consumption but for a broader market. Thus, in the Coromandel coast, the tracts around Surat, Ahmadabad, Agra and Lahore, as well as in Awadh and parts of Bengal there was an ex-

[20]There are innumerable references to this in Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Vol. I, p. 686; Vol. II, pp. 218, 224-5, 551 *et. seq.*

[21]There are plenty of references to this in the documents in the Allahabad Records Office. These relate mostly to the second half of the seventeenth century but stray references to the sale and purchase of land during the earlier period are also found. See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, pp. 111-12, 115.

tensive diffusion of textile production in rural areas for a wider market. Although manufacture in these areas was organised on a household basis, it was closely controlled and financed by the big merchants or their agents. In such villages money entered increasingly into the daily purposes of life. Again, certain regions in the country specialised in the production of cash crops such as indigo, cotton, sugar-cane, oilseeds, etc. It is not known to what extent the pattern of life in the villages in such areas corresponded with that in villages where subsistence farming largely prevailed. For instance, how did the peasants spend the money realised by them from the sale of cash crops? Was it spent in the village, or did a portion of it go for the purchase of city made goods?[22] There was no dead uniformity in the organisation of village life. As a money economy developed, peasants and artisans in some of the more developed areas tended to be drawn into the vortex of a world market. A recession in the prices of textile goods, indigo, etc., affected not only the merchants, but also the lives of large numbers of peasants.

The growth of a money economy was fostered also by the revenue policy of the Mughals. From the time of Akbar the Mughal government assessed and demanded the land revenue largely in cash. While this measure could not be uniformly imposed in all areas, in the central portion of the empire, viz., Punjab, Delhi, Agra, Awadh, Allahabad and Gujarat, the land revenue was assessed and demanded in cash, though crop sharing was not completely abandoned. This new departure apparently considerably strengthened the position of the rural grain dealer-cum-merchant.[23] There had always been a chain of villages which acted as collecting centres of grain (*mandis*) leading up to a bigger *mandi* for a region. These bigger *mandis* were closely linked to the large towns and to the big grain-dealers (the *banjaras*). A considerable growth of small townships (*qasbas*) is

[22]In this connection see remarks of S. Nurul Hasan in a paper on 'The Problem of Nationalities in Medieval India', *Procs. IHC*, 1944, pp. 370-6.

[23]A type of document, *Tumar Jizyah*, regarding the assessment of *jizyah* in the rural areas for Aurangzeb's reign show that there was considerable social stratification in the villages, about five per cent of the population in the villages belonging to the 'rich' category. See *Khulasat-us-Siyaq*, 39b-41b. Also documents in the RSA, Bikaner. It would be fair to assume that the rich section was not satisfied merely with goods produced locally in the villages.

visible during the late medieval period in India. The *qasbas* were apparently regional centres for the collection of grain. They also came to contain a resident rural gentry in the shape of various petty assignees of land revenue—the holders of *waqf*, *inam*, *madad-i-maash*, etc. This was a large and growing class in medieval India. Members of this class tried to ape the ways of the higher gentry, and often lived in considerable style.[24] Economically, they did not compare with the nobility. Nevertheless, they provided a steady demand for various luxury goods which were generally imported from the bigger towns, but were sometimes also capable of being produced locally.

With the growth of a money economy, the grain dealers-cum-merchants (*banias*) began to act also as moneylenders (*mahajans*) and *shroffs* (money changers). The peasant often lacked ready money to pay the land revenue, and had no option but to resort to them. The character of the village *bania* thus underwent a subtle change. By virtue of his capital, he was often in a position to exercise considerable pull in village society. Nor was it only the peasants who resorted to these moneylenders. The *jagirdars* appointed as their agents for the collection of land revenue generally men having local knowledge, and often drawn, for this reason, from the class of the rural gentry. However, the *jagirdars* invariably demanded a large sum of money by way of security (*qabz*). During the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, this became a thinly disguised device for letting out the *jagir* on auction (*ijara*), the *jagir* being leased out to the person who provided the biggest *qabz*.[25] Since the agents were generally men of small means, they had to resort to the moneylender who claimed his share in the profits. Moreover, in all cases where cash payments had to be made, the services of a *shroff* or money changer were necessary, for the value of a coin depended on the year of its minting, metallic purity, etc., and no one would accept a cash

[24]A rural gentry which might carry on agriculture on an extensive scale with the aid of hired labour was not completely absent during the period. Thus, we are told that in the eighteenth century one Muqarrab Khan selected a fertile tract of land on which cultivation was carried on by his agents under his supervision 'so much so that he controlled the sale of milk and seeds. As a result he made much profit out of it.' *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Vol. II, p. 301 (note added in 1966).

[25]Bhimsen, *Nuskha-i-Dilkusha*, B.M.Ms. ff. 138b-140a.

payment unless it had been certified by a *shroff*.[26]

Thus, the growth of money economy in the villages led to the rise of a class of grain dealers-cum-moneylenders. Given the proper historical conditions, the prosperous moneylender-cum-trader living in small townships and the rural gentry with a hereditary title to land were capable of developing a rich peasant economy.

Finally, as far as the accumulation of liquid or money capital in the hands of the bourgeoisie is concerned, there is plenty of evidence to show that a class with considerable money capital existed, both in the western coastal region of India which was chiefly concerned with trade with West Asia and Europe, as well as in South India (the Coromandel coast) which was chiefly concerned with trade with South-East Asia. Baharji Bohra (Virji Vora of the *Factory Records*) was reputed to be the richest merchant of the world in his time He dominated the Surat market for almost two decades and had branch offices in Ahmadabad, Agra, Burhanpur and Golconda as well as in Malabar and on the East Coast. He owned a fleet of ships, and sometimes also sent his cargo in English ships to Java, Basra and Gombroon. The name of Malaya Chetti on the East Coast is similarly mentioned.[27] In the later period, Abdul Ghaffar Bohra is mentioned as one of the wealthiest merchants in the world.[28]

Apart from the merchant princes, there were the *shroffs* or money changers who specialised in financial transactions and the sale and purchase of gold and silver. Many of them had resources enough to cash *hundis* (bills of exchange) worth lakhs on sight. At a later date, the house of Jagat Seth in Bengal could cash a *hundi* worth several crores on sight. Bills of exchange (*hundis*) issued by the *shroffs* were honoured throughout India as also in large parts of Asia. The rates of discount on these bills were surprisingly low and attested to the easy availability of money and a highly developed financial system. *Shroffs* were also sometimes used by the kings and nobles in despatching

[26]See S.H. Hodivala, *Historical Studies in Mughal Numismatics* (Calcutta, 1923); also Irfan Habib, 'The Currency System of the Mughal Empire (1556-1707)', *MIQ*, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-1, 1961.

[27]Moreland, *Akbar to Aurangzeb*, pp. 153-6.

[28]*Mirat-i-Ahmadi*, Vol. II, pp. 4-5; *Maasir-ul-Umara*, Vol. III, p. 746.

treasure and land revenue from one part of the country to another.[29]

However, all these developments should be seen against the background of the presence of numerous institutional obstacles to the growth of a full-fledged money economy in India. Foremost among these may be listed the caste system which interposed a formidable barrier to social mobility. Village society also showed surprising powers of resistance, petty village handicrafts surviving well into the twentieth century despite the competition of cheap, machine-made goods, and an unfavourable political and legal system during British rule. It may be readily conceded that the Mughal emperors and the Mughal ruling class, as such, had little concept of the policies and methods needed to foster trade and industry in the manner necessary. Trade, for them, was an important, but nonetheless, a supplementary and secondary source of income. They failed to understand the nature of the new forces at work in society and to realise the vital importance of a navy, and of science and technology.

It is not necessary to enter into the controversy whether Indian society was capable, on its own, of developing from merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism. What is significant is that the growth of merchant capitalism itself was arrested in the eighteenth century, and industrial capitalism hardly showed any signs of developing till the third quarter of the nineteenth or the early twentieth century. This explains many features of Indian social and economic development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[29]See Irfan Habib, 'Banking in Mughal India', *Contributions to Indian Economic History* (Calcutta, 1960), pp. 1-20; *Balmukand Nama*, revised edn., Satish Chandra (Bombay, 1972), letter no. 13.

XIII

Role of the Local Community, the Zamindars and the State in Providing Capital Inputs for the Improvement and Expansion of Cultivation

MANY ASPECTS of the working of the feudal system in India are still obscure. The working of the administration at the central and provincial levels, the rights and privileges of those holding proprietary as well as superior rights in land (*zamindari*) and the position and role of the bureaucracy (*umara, mansabdars*) which had strong links with land have been studied by a number of scholars. More recently there has been a growing interest in the study of the Indian village society and the working of the administration at the local level. While sociologists have been mainly interested in the structure of village society, in particular, the relations between the artisans and the cultivators (the *jajmani* system) and the impact of modernisation on its structure, historians have continued to devote major attention to the problem of land rights. It is, however, necessary to examine in greater detail the working of the village system which is vital for a better understanding of the working of the Indian feudal system.[1]

This paper was read at the XXX International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, in Mexico in August 1976. Published in *IHR*, Vol. III No. 1, 1976, pp. 83-98.

[1]In this connection, see S. Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations*, pp. 1-2. For the growth of feudalism in India, see R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism: c.* 300-1200 (Calcutta, 1965); D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London, 1965). See also Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London and Boston, 1975).

Such a study was difficult in the absence of village records for the period preceding the British conquest of India, that is, before it was distorted and disrupted due, in part, to ignorance and in part, to deliberate policies. Fortunately, we have now begun to tap the mass of village records lying in different archives particularly those in Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The records in the State Archives, Bikaner, do not go back beyond the middle of the seventeenth century. Preliminary studies of eastern Rajasthan have thrown light on rural administration, land rights, nature of the state demand and various aspects of the working of the village community. Early British records are also valuable for studying the rural economy as well as the working of the system at the grassroots level.

The feudal system in medieval India was characterised by the direct exploitation of the peasant by the ruling classes which used their personal authority backed by state power for appropriating a substantial proportion of the peasants' produce in return for a promise of 'protection'. While the peasant was not unfree or a serf his status was definitely a dependent one. We are not concerned here with the rights and obligations of the peasants, but with the basic question: to what extent was the system able to cope with the needs of economic production, that is, production for the rural population as well as for a growing city population? This, in turn, implied providing for the necessary inputs of crucial items such as seeds, agricultural implements, water, etc. (not to exclude labour), at the right time without which normal cultivation as well as expansion could not be ensured. Lack of these inputs at the opportune time could make a big difference even in normal production, as is well known to anyone familiar with Indian agriculture.

Population trends in seventeenth and eighteenth century India are still a matter of debate among scholars. However, there is no disagreement about the marked growth of the city population during the seventeenth century, although the picture is not so clear for the eighteenth century. It appears that despite the sack of such populous cities as Lahore, Delhi and Agra during the first half of the eighteenth century, and the decline of other towns in north-west India such as Multan, the net city population did not decline due to the rise of new towns in eastern India such as Lucknow, Hooghly, Calcutta, etc., and of towns

such as Madras in the south.[2] At any rate, the decline was not a marked one. Since India was self-sufficient in food grains—in fact it exported rice and wheat to some of the neighbouring countries—the growth of urbanisation would imply a corresponding expansion of the land under cultivation, assuming that agricultural techniques remained the same. Thus there appears to have been continuous pressure on the peasant for producing more cash crops, partly because it meant more income for the state, and partly because of the growing demand for various kinds of manufactured goods from the ruling classes and the expanding city populace, as also the growing foreign markets.[3] But a shift to high-grade crops as well as expansion of cultivation implied additional capital inputs. The question is, which agency or agencies provided these inputs? Was it done primarily by the village community itself, or did external agencies, including the state, play a definite role in it? If so, is it possible to ascertain the share or the pattern of the contribution of the different agencies?

It has been argued that there was little scope for the village community itself supplying a substantial part of the inputs needed, since the Mughal revenue demand was so heavy that it left barely enough to the peasant for his subsistence. This argument, however, disregards two factors. In the first instance, the concept of subsistence level, being an integral part of Marx's theory of necessary labour and surplus value, must not be regarded as a concept of irreducible human needs.[4] The subsistence level is linked to the mode and relations of production of a given society and can vary during different periods and regions of a country, and also between countries. The socially accepted standard would, possibly, include the cost of reproduction or continuing production which was in the vital interests of the ruling class and without which the peasant could not survive. Medieval

[2]H.K. Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India*; and *Urbanisation and Urban Centres*.

[3]W.H. Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*; T. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel*.

[4]K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I (Moscow), pp. 511-12. According to Hindess and Hirst, 'Marxism, therefore, rejects not only those concepts of surplus that are defined with respect to the physiological needs of the individual human subject but also those in which the surplus is thought to consist of an excess over the basic consumption needs of society.' *Pre-Capitalist Modes*, p. 24.

India had a two-crop-a-year economy as compared to the single crop economy of medieval Europe—a point which had been noted by almost every contemporary traveller. As such, it must have generated a larger agricultural surplus than Europe during the period and supported a ruling class which could afford to live more luxuriously than the ruling class in Europe without necessarily interfering with the processes of agriculture and normal expansion. Secondly, it is now clear that a considerable degree of stratification had taken place in medieval Indian village society.[5] The economic condition of all the peasants in the village was not the same. Even if we assume that the bulk of the peasants lived at the bare subsistence level, after paying off the state dues, the question is, what were the devices by which reproduction and normal expansion was ensured? In particular, were there any section or sections in Indian village society which were themselves able to provide capital inputs in land?

On the basis of recent studies, it is possible to divide the peasants in village society in medieval India into three broad categories. We may exclude the village artisans from the category of peasants, for although the artisans were sometimes allowed to hold small strips of land for personal cultivation, this was merely supplementary and, in any case, such lands formed a very small part of the cultivable land in a village.[6] The categories of cultivators in the village are designated as *khud-kasht*, *pahi-kasht* and *muzarian* in the Persian sources. The *khud-kasht* were proprietors of the land they cultivated. The main feature of their tenure was cultivation with the help of family labour, their own ploughs and oxen. Hired help for cultivation was definitely discouraged, since they paid land revenue at a concessional rate which was fixed by custom and which under normal circumstances was lower than the prevailing rate.[7] The *khud-kasht* had a number of other privileges: they had the pick of fields in the village, and used common facilities from ponds, the village common and the forests. The British found in Bengal that the *khud-kasht* generally held more land than was shown in the village register,

[5]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 123; see Chapter III; K.V. Purandare, ed., *SCS*, Vol. III, pp. 427; V.K. Rajwade, ed., *MIS*, Vol. XVIII, p. 33.

[6]Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System*, p. 122; S. Nurul Hasan, *Agrarian Relations*, p. 28; A.I. Chicherov, *India: Economic Development*, pp. 80-1.

[7]See Chapter IV.

and paid land revenue only for what they were assessed. But it would be difficult to argue that this was a normal feature under Mughal administration, though its prevalence in some areas cannot be ruled out. The *khud-kasht* in reality formed what has been called the village community inasmuch as the entire body of the *khud-kasht* peasants, though individually assessed, were held collectively responsible for paying the land revenue. This was related not so much to their right to property: the *khud-kasht* had the right to bequeath, mortgage and, under certain conditions, to alienate their property. Land was never sold for default in the payment of state dues. The more valuable asset of the *khud-kasht* peasants which the state valued was their capacity to maintain cultivation at a high level and, where necessary and possible, to improve and extend it. In other words, they collectively constituted the class of peasants which could be expected to make investment in land.

Evidence from eastern Rajasthan suggests that the upper castes of the brahmins, kshatriyas and vaishyas (*mahajans*), along with the *patels*, *muqaddams*, *chaudhris*, etc., were assessed at a concessional rate. These sections were called *riyayati*. They had a separate *dastur* (manual of assessment) and paid 10 to 17 per cent less than the average tenant. In some cases, the sections allied to the ruling house paid as little as half the normal rate.[8] But it should not be forgotten that similar concessions were available to *pahis* or peasants brought in from outside to resettle the village or to expand cultivation. In one *pargana* in eastern Rajasthan, the *riyayatis* constituted 14.46 per cent of the revenue payees, while in another they formed as much as 32.2 per cent.[9] It is not certain whether such concessional terms to the higher castes were a continuation of an older system which persisted in parts of Rajasthan and, possibly in some other areas, or whether these were a part of the normal Mughal revenue system. On balance, we are inclined to support the former rather than the latter since the Mughal documents do not anywhere refer to such concessions. Unless more evidence is forthcoming to dis-

[8]Dilbagh Singh, 'Caste and the Structure of Village Society in Eastern Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century', *IHR*, Vol. II, No. 2, pp. 299-311; G.D. Sharma, *Rajput Polity: A Study of Politics and Administration of the State of Marwar, 1638-1749*, Delhi, 1977, p. 88.

[9]Dilbagh Singh, 'Caste and the Structure of Village Society', p. 302.

prove this assumption, the existence of such concessions may, at best, be considered a regional phenomenon.[10]

The *pahi-kasht*, as has been shown elsewhere,[11] were peasants who came to the village from outside the *zamindari* and were, in that sense, considered outsiders even though they may have their habitations (*chapar band*) in the village. The *pahis* again, were of two types. The first who were more valued were the peasants who owned their ploughs and oxen. Sometimes these *pahis* moved from village to village for favourable terms. The second were those without their own implements. These were often untouchables, and hardly distinguishable from the *muzarian* or share-croppers. The term *pahi* is an old Indian word which signifies that rural mobility was not a new phenomenon. A sizeable increase in the number of *pahis*, as seems to have happened in Bengal under British rule, could be regarded as a sign of crisis in the working of the system.

Village records from eastern Rajasthan show that a class of substantial peasants were to be found in the villages. The existence of such a class during the earlier period can be inferred from revenue manuals of the period which refer to *kalataran* or big men and *halmirs* or people with six to eight ploughs in the villages.[12] The latter played a definite role in the extension of cultivation. They could also let out their ploughs to the *muzarian* on a share-cropping basis. The *yad-dashti-hal-bail* or account of the plough and bullocks held currently by the cultivators in each village, the increase or decrease of ploughs and oxen, distribution of ploughs and oxen on a personal and caste basis, etc., are significant from this point of view. Tables culled from such *yad-dashtis* from eastern Rajasthan for the year 1666 may be seen in Appendices I to IV.

A preliminary analysis shows that in *qasba* Chatsu the poor peasants, that is, those who had one ox each, accounted for 30-5 per cent of the *asamis* and had 14.5 per cent of the oxen; peasants who had two to four oxen each, whom we may call middle

[10]According to W.H. Hunter, *Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 33, 34, 37, 54, Vol. II, pp. 255, 256), the brahmin paid in some localities in Orissa, one-eighth of the produce while the other cultivators paid half to three-fifths (reference added).

[11]See Chapter IV.

[12]S. Nurul Hasan, 'Three Studies of the Zamindari System', pp. 233-9.

peasants, formed the largest mass. They accounted for 62.5 per cent of the *asamis* and held 71.5 per cent of the oxen. Peasants who had more than four oxen each may be called substantial or rich peasants.[13] They were five per cent of the *asamis* but held 14 per cent of the oxen in the *qasba*. The pattern in *mauza* Kotdwara in *pargana* Chatsu was more or less the same, with a smaller percentage of poor peasants—21.5 per cent as compared to 30.5 per cent in *qasba* Chatsu. However, the situation could vary considerably. Thus, in *qasba* Chala Kalan (Appendix II), the proportion of poor peasants with half a plough[14] came to 46 per cent. The rest had one plough each. There were no 'rich' peasants. *Mauza* Kadma in the same *pargana* had only 13.5 per cent *asamis* who had half a plough; the remaining 86.5 per cent had one to two ploughs each. On the other hand, in *mauza* Multhan in *sarkar* Tijara (Appendix III), there were no peasants with less than one plough each, and four *asamis* (10 per cent) had more than two ploughs each. In Ramsee there was one peasant with half a plough, and seven *asamis* (16 per cent) had more than two ploughs each. Thus, there was considerable inequality between villages. We have a reference to an *asami* in *mauza* Gopalpur in *pargana* Chatsu having 25 oxen.

At the *pargana* level, the differences are equally striking, as is apparent from the table below:

Pargana	*I* *Poor* (%)		*II* *Middle* (%)		*III* *Rich* (%)		*Total*
1. Chatsu (26 villages)	24.4	(363)	66.6	(907)	9	(133)	100(1,483)
2. Chala Kalan (94 villages)	18.6	(492)	80.9	(2,139)	0.5	(14)	100(2,645)
3. Kotla	0.6	(5)	80.2	(741)	9.2	(76)	100(822)

It would thus be seen that the poor peasants with one bullock or half a plough, who possibly had dwarf holdings, constituted

[13]The expression 'rich' is not being used here in the Marxian sense of capitalist farmers, that is, those who had surplus capital which they used for hiring labour. These were peasants who had surplus capital but which could be used in a variety of ways, including usury. It was generally not used for hiring labour due to social and administrative restraints.

[14]A plough with two bullocks formed a unit. Half a plough would, therefore, mean a plough with one bullock.

about 20 to 30 per cent of the *asamis*. In practice, they may have formed a larger part of the village population since we have no reference in our documents to those without any ploughs or oxen, that it, the landless and the village artisans. A rich village could have two to five substantial or rich peasants. The productive capacity of a village could be judged by the number of ploughs and oxen added and new wells sunk. By the number of oxen and ploughs added it would appear that agriculture was expanding in eastern Rajasthan during the period. Further, the number of ploughs and bullocks added by *gavetis* (*khud-kasht*) having one or two bullocks or half or one plough is significant. Obviously this section was the keenest to add to its agricultural resources. It appears that 10 to 16 per cent of such cultivators were able to add to their resources in the year 1665. The correlation of bullocks with ploughs is not available in the present documents. These, in turn, need to be correlated to the area under cultivation in each village for which time series have yet to be worked out.[15] Thus, a more detailed study is needed to draw any final conclusions. However, from a preliminary study it would appear that the land revenue demand during the period to which our documents relate was not so heavy as to preclude a peasant, having one or two oxen, adding to his assets. While the increase of bullocks would, to some extent, have been due to natural factors, additional ploughs would have needed investment.

The existence of a class of rich or substantial peasants does not, of course, prove that the capital avilable to them would be invested for production purposes. A recent study by Dilbagh Singh[16] shows that the capital of such peasants who were referred to as *mahajans* was used in some cases as usurious capital. Money was lent to needy peasants who had mortgaged their lands, and who, when unable to pay, lost their lands and sank to the status of tenants-at-will. In a few cases, the rich peasants were allowed to hire cultivators to plough the fields which they had acquired in this manner or which they held earlier. The state

[15]In this connection, see S.P. Gupta, *Land Revenue System in Eastern Rajasthan (1650-750)*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aligarh Muslim University, 1974; cf. Dilbagh Singh, *Local and Land Revenue Administration of the State of Jaipur (1750-1800)*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1975.

[16]'The Role of the Mahajans in the Rural Economy in Eastern Rajasthan during the Eighteenth Century', *Social Scientist*, May 1974.

generally frowned upon this practice since it meant surplus land belonging to the *khud-kasht* and the *riyayati* not being made available to the ordinary peasant for cultivation. The major objection to this practice was, however, financial: *khud-kasht* lands were assessed at a concessional rate and their cultivation with the help of hired labour would imply a lower revenue to the state than if these had been let out to a peasant. Social factors cannot, however, be discounted. A hired hand was looked down upon and, with a sufficient number of landless peasants in the villages, social opinion would have strongly favoured a system of letting out lands. Thus, state policy and public opinion tended to disfavour the growth of capitalist farming.

It would appear that despite large tracts of cultivable waste being available, there was a relative surplus of human beings in the settled villages. This brings us back to the role of the state in the extension and improvement of cultivation. The village headmen generally belonged to the hereditary class of peasant proprietors, that is, the *khud-kasht*. As we have seen, amongst these there were men of substance who had large numbers of ploughs and oxen which could be let out to others. The role of the village headman who was drawn from this section was important in this regard. He not only helped to disburse the *taqavi* granted by the state for providing seeds, bullocks, etc., and stood guarantee (*zamin*) for its recovery, but also sometimes gave *taqavi* to the cultivators out of his own resources. Or he could induce the village *mahajan* to give loans to the needy and recover it in instalments. There are also instances of the village community as a whole taking loans for the resettlement of the village. It may be presumed that loans advanced by the headman (*patil* or *muqaddam*) and *mahajans* were short-term loans of limited value, and granted to individual peasants. They would hardly cover more ambitious projects such as building a *bandh*, or constructing a water channel, or digging a water reservoir, or establishing a new village or rehabilitating a deserted one. Such enterprises were often undertaken in conjunction with the 'state' which, for our purpose, might include local officials, *jagirdars* and *zamindars* who held superior rights in land.

The procedure of setting up new villages has been set out in a number of documents. The initiative could be taken either by the *zamindar* or the *Jagirdar*, in conjunction with the *muqaddams*

of one village or a group of villages. If the area had to be cleared of jungles, a professional band of wood-cutters would be employed, as also people required for constructing wells or making a water-channel. A body of *khud-kasht* peasants with ploughs and bullocks could be entrusted with the task of bringing the land under cultivation. These, in turn, might employ *pahis* who might have their own ploughs and bullocks, or who could rent these from the *khud-kasht* peasants. The state would help in giving land at a progressive rate extending over a long period. Such a tenure was called *istawah* tenure in Maharashtra. The procedure for fixing the period has been described by Capt. Pottinger, Provisional Collector of Ahmadnagar, in a letter dated 15 January 1819 to Elphinstone in these words:

> When a *patil* wished to obtain *istawah* for himself or any of the *rayats* of his village, he repaired to the *shekdar*, or (if near him) to the *kamavisdar*, to whom he applied for the usual *kaul*. An inquiry was then instituted into the nature of the soil, the number of years it had lain waste, the probable length of time it would require to bring it in into complete cultivation, the number of bullocks that would be needed for each plough to till it, the facilities which the situation offered for irrigation, and the means which the cultivators had of availing themselves of this circumstance. As soon as all these points were ascertained, the soil was valued, with reference to any contiguous fields or village lands of a similar description, and the *kauls* were then drawn out under the *kamavisdar's* seal and given to the *patils*, who handed them over to the *rayats*, with an exhortation to avail themselves of the *sarkar's* kindness, and to use their best exertions to profit by the terms he had obtained for them.
>
> When the *kaul* had thus been formally executed and delivered, the *rayat* became virtually the owner of the field or proportion of ground stated in it, because so long as he fulfilled the terms and paid his rents with regularity he could not be deprived of the right of cultivation, but the moment he failed to do either of these the *kamavisdar* would dispossess him, and entrust his land to another on the same or a different footing as might seem necessary.[17]

It is clear that the capital expenses were shared in part by the state, and in part by the *patil* acting on his own behalf and/or

[17]Extract of a letter dated 15 January 1819, from Capt. Pottinger, Provisional Collector, Ahmadnagar, to the Honourable M. Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, pp. 388-9.

on behalf of the *khud-kasht* peasants who had money and means to invest. The *istawah* tenure was more complex and given when the state was interested in the entire area being brought under cultivation. This put a further burden on the *patil*, who was held responsible for anyone who might be unable to pay for the whole land for which he was assessed. 'Unless he (the *patil*) had some capital beyond what was invested in the new land, he would be unable to grant remission to such *rayats* as had been unfortunate.'[18] Labour for *istawah* tenures was generally provided by the *pahis*, who seized the opportunity to join the enterprise in the hope of acquiring *mirasi* rights over the lands they cultivated. As Pottinger goes on to explain:

> When the period of an *istawah* grant expired, the *rayat* might, if he chose, cease to cultivate to the full extent of his ground, but by so doing he forfeited (as I have already stated) his claim to it in future; and the *patil*, in concert with the *shekdar*, acting under permission from the *kamavisdar*, was bound to find, if possible, another cultivator whose tenure was exactly that of his predecessor. On the other hand, if the *rayat* was pleased with his lands, he had it in his power to secure them in his family as a *mirasi*, or hereditary possession by simply agreeing to pay the rent of them whether they were cultivated or not. The rent received by government in this case is termed *shahra*, and nothing short of utter poverty will prevent its being paid. A man will sell his house and bullocks, or clothes and even bind himself to serve another, to ensure the payment of his *shahra*.[19]

As far as the rehabilitation of ruined or partly ruined villages was concerned, the procedure followed was slightly different. The first step was to locate the *muqaddam*, and once that had been done, the *muqaddam* was either granted a short-term *ijara* on progressive terms, or allowed to attract *pahis* to the village on favourable terms. When the *muqaddam* was the *ijaradar*, he had first to find a guarantor (*zamin*). The *zamin* could be the *zamindar*, or a *mahajan* or, in some cases, the village community, that is, the entire body of *khud-kasht* peasants. If the land

[18]Minutes by Elphinstone, dated 6 April 1821, East India Papers, Vol. III, pp. 677-97, quoted in *Official Writings*, p. 498.

[19]Extract of a letter dated 15 January 1819, from Captain Pottinger, Provisional Collector at Ahmadnagar, to the Honourable M. Elphinstone, *Official Writings*, pp. 389-90.

was to be brought under cultivation by the *zamindar*, or an *ijaradar* other than the *muqaddam*, he would likewise have to provide the *zamin*.[20] *The zamindars, the mahajans and the muqaddams thus formed a group which stood surety for each other.*

Thus, it would appear that there were two separate but not disconnected circles: the individual peasants and the village community on the one hand and the state on the other, which provided support and capital for the improvement and expansion of cultivation. The system of mutual guarantee, while helpful to the state, was distinctly useful in a situation in which capital was relatively scarce.

It is not possible for us in the present state of our knowledge to attempt to compute the share of the state and the local community in providing capital inputs for the improvement and expansion of cultivation. It would appear that in normal circumstances, capital needed for the continuance of the processes of cultivation and also for some expansion was provided by the village itself, without any significant inputs by the state. But the support and protection of the traditional village institutions by the state was implied, in the absence of which the processes were likely to be seriously impaired, as happened under British rule. Major programmes of expansion were obviously beyond the means of the local community, and implied active involvement of the state.

From the evidence available, a conclusion could perhaps be drawn that land revenue demand in Mughal India did not reach a point of diminishing agricultural returns and that enough was left with the community in the village to ensure normal cultivation and limited expansion. The pattern of investment and expansion was, to a considerable degree, shaped by social and institutional factors such as the pattern of landholding, caste formation, local administration, etc. It is difficult in the present state of our knowledge to say that there was a definite correlation between stratification and growth, that is, that agrarian expansion was faster in those areas where there was a larger proportion of rich peasants, though this possibility cannot be precluded. For this purpose, more detailed studies would be necessary. It is obvious that in major programmes of expansion, the state

[20]There are innumerable documents on this point in Maharashtra as well as in Rajasthan. For the former, see *SCS*.

had to play a definite, even a leading role. The role of *zamindars*, the *jagirdars* and even of the local community in such programmes also needs to be assessed more fully. Preoccupation with the magnitude of revenue demand should not be allowed to inhibit such studies.

APPENDIX I

HAQIQATI YAD-DASHTI HAL BAIL PARGANA CHATSU, V.S. 1723/A.D. 1606

1. *Qasba* Chatsu

(a) Growth of oxen

	Asamis	Oxen	
V.S. 1723	200	422	
V.S. 1722	193	405	
Izafa	7	17	
By *pahis*	7	11	
By *gavetis*	6	6	Each *gaveti* had one bullock previously.

(b) Distribution of oxen

Asamis	*Oxen each*	*Total oxen*	*Percentage of total asamis*
61	1	61	30.5
97	2	194	48.5
20	3	60	10.0
12	4	48	6.0
5	5	25	2.5
3	6	18	1.5
2	8	16	1.0
200		422	100

Note: Thus, 61 *asamis* (30.5 per cent) had one ox each; 129 *asamis* (64 per cent) two to four oxen each, whereas 10 *asamis* (five per cent) had more than four oxen each.

2. *Mauza* Kotkhawda

(a) Growth of oxen

	Asamis	Oxen
V.S. 1723	159	382
V.S. 1722	154	374

Izafa	5	35
By *pahis*	5	6
By *gavetis*	23	29

Note: Thus, 61 *asamis* (30.5 per cent) with one ox had a total of 61 oxen (14 per cent); 129 *asamis* (64.5 per cent) with two to four oxen each had a total of 382 oxen (71.5 per cent) and 10 *asamis* (five per cent) who had more than four oxen each, had a total of 59 oxen (14 per cent).

(b) Distribution of oxen

Asamis	*Oxen each*	*Total oxen*	*Percentage of asamis*
34	1	34	21.5
75	2	150	47.2
25	3	75	15.1
11	4	44	6.9
6	5	30	3.7
7	6	42	4.5
1	7	7	0.6
159		382	100

Note: Thus, 34 *asamis* (21.5 per cent) had 34 oxen (9 per cent); 111 *asamis* (69.2 per cent) had 269 oxen (70 per cent), whereas 14 *asamis* (8.8 per cent) with more than four oxen each had 79 oxen (20 per cent).

(c) Pattern of growth

Number of asamis	*Oxen each*	*Oxen added by each*	*Total oxen added*
12	1	1	12
1	1	2	2
3	2	1	3
1	3	1	1
3	3	2	6
1	3	3	3
1	4	1	1
1	6	1	1
23			29

Note: Thus, 14 oxen were added by 13 *gavetis* who had earlier one ox each; 14 oxen were added by nine *gavetis* who had earlier two to four oxen each; one peasant, who had six oxen, added only one. Of the *pahis*, five added six bullocks. Presumably, they had one ox each earlier. The number of *asamis* who added to their bullocks was 14 per cent of the total.

APPENDIX II

YAD-DASHTI HAQIQATI HAL PARGANA, CHALA KALAN V.S. 1722/A.D. 1665

Total number of *mauzas*		146
Tankhwah dargah	2	
Tankhwah jagir	35	
Deserted	3	
Ijara	6	
Total	46	
Balance		100
Total number of ploughs		(2985½)
Asli		2201
Izafa		784½
By *pahis*	165	
By *gavetis*	619½	
1. *Qasba* Chala Kalan		
(a) Total number of ploughs		119½
Asli		103
Izafa		16½
By *pahis*	Nil	
By *gavetis*	16½	

(b) Distribution of ploughs

Asamis	*Plough each*	*Total ploughs*	*Percentage of total asamis*
71	1½	35½	45.8
84	1	84	54.2
155		119½	100

Note: One plough normally meant a plough and two bullocks.

(c) Pattern of growth

Number of asamis	*Plough each earlier*	*Plough added by each*	*Total no. of ploughs added*
10	½	½	½
13	1	½	6½
5	1	1	5
28			16½

Note: Thus, 28 *asamis* or about 18 per cent of the total added 16½ ploughs or about 16 per cent.

2. *Mauza* Kadma

(a) Total number of ploughs		65
Asli		39½
Izafa		25½
By *pahis*	2½	
By *gavetis*	23	

(b) Distribution of ploughs

Asamis	*Plough each*	*Total ploughs*	*Percentage of total asamis*
7	½	3½	13.5
27	1	27	53.0
3	1½	4½	5.8
15	2	30	28.8
52		65	100

Note: Thus, 37 *asamis* (69 per cent) who had 1½ ploughs or less had 35 ploughs in all (54 per cent); 15 *asamis* (31 per cent) had 30 ploughs (46 per cent). No *asami* had more than two ploughs.

(c) Pattern of growth

Number of asamis	*Plough each earlier*	*Plough added by each*	*Total no. of ploughs added*
11	½	½	5½
1	½	1	1
1	½	1½	1½
2	1	½	1
14	1	1	14
29			23

APPENDIX III

YAD-DASHTI RAQBA HAL, PARGANA KOTLA, SARKAR TIJARA, SUBA SHAHJANABAD, V.S. 1723/A.D. 1666.

Total number of *mauzas*		106
Asli	95	
Dakhili	11	
Jagir dargah	3	
Jagir tankhwah	7¾	
Deserted	4	
	14¾	
Balance		91¼

Total number of ploughs 1,142
Asli 1,078
Izafa 64

1. *Mauza* Multhan
   (a) Total number of ploughs 58
   Izafa Nil
   (b) Distribution of ploughs

Asamis	*Plough each*	*Total ploughs*	*Percentage of total asamis*
26	1	26	69
8	2	16	21
2	3	6	5
2	5	10	5
38		58	100

2. *Mauza* Ramsee
   (a) Total number of ploughs 74
   Asli 63
   Izafa 11
   (b) Distribution of ploughs

Asamis	*Ploughs each*	*Total ploughs*	*Percentage of total asamis*
1	½	½	2
23	1	23	54
5	1½	7½	12
7	2	14	16
3	3	9	7
4	5	20	9
43		74	100

No details of *izafa*.

Note: Thus, 14 *asamis* (32 percent) had two ploughs or more each or a total of 43 ploughs or 58 per cent.

APPENDIX IV

PARGANA CHATSU (SARKAR AJMER): DETAILS OF 26 VILLAGES

Total *asamis*: 1,483

Oxen each	*Number of asamis*	*Percentage of total asamis*
1	363	24.47
2	656	44.23
3	215	14.49
4	116	7.82
More	133	8.96

CHALA KALA (SARKAR REWARI) : DETAILS OF 94 VILLAGES

Total *asamis*: 2,645

Plough each	*Number of asamis*	*Percentage of total asamis*
½	492	18.60
1	1,615	61.05
1½	101	3.81
2	423	15.99
3	14	0.52

KOTLA (*Sarkar* TIJARA) : DETAILS OF 49 VILLAGES

Total *asamis*: 822

Plough each	*Number of asamis*	*Percentage of total asamis*
½	5	0.60
1	468	56.93
1½	10	1.21
2	263	31.99
3	54	6.56
4	17	2.06
5	5	0.60

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